

GEORGE BERNARD SHAW

From a photograph by Eduard J. Steichen made at 10 Adelphi Terrace, London,
W. C., August, 1907

GEORGE BERNARD SHAW

HIS LIFE AND WORKS

A CRITICAL BIOGRAPHY

(Authorized)

By

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Of the University of North Carolina

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AUTHOR'S INTRODUCTION

MORE than six years ago I conceived the idea of writing a book about Bernard Shaw. The magnitude of the undertaking and the elusiveness of the subject, had I realized them then in their full significance, might well have made me pause. My earliest interest in his work, aroused by his thoughtful laughter and piqued by his elfish impudence, convinced me that this remarkable talent was like no other I had known.

In characteristic style, Mr. Shaw once gave the following fantastic account of the evolution of the present work. A young American professor, Shaw explained, wished to write a book about him. Originally, he thought of beginning his task by writing an article for a daily newspaper. But so rapidly did the material grow that he soon saw the necessity of expanding the newspaper article into a long essay for a monthly review. When the essay was completed, in view of the mass of material in his hands, it appeared totally inadequate to express what he really wished to say about Bernard Shaw. It then occurred to him to write a short book entitled "G. B. S." Alas! This plan had also to be relinquished, for it was now manifest that in no such small compass was it possible to do justice to his subject. At last he hit upon the brilliant scheme of his final adoption: he would write a history of modern thought in twenty volumes. After considering the forerunners of his hero in the first nineteen volumes, he would devote the twentieth solely to the treatment of George Bernard Shaw.

Such is the history of the genesis of this book—as narrated by Shaw in the well-known Milesian manner. His whimsicalities find gay expression in the invention of such fantastic stories, which delight his auditors and exasperate only the persons concerning whom the invention is concocted. For example, Mr. Shaw once laughingly declared that "Henderson began by hailing me as an infant prodigy, and ended by pronouncing me a genius." And he delights in retailing the story of my chiv-

alously coming to his rescue under the impression that he was an unknown and struggling dramatist who sorely needed, and greatly deserved, enthusiastic championship.

The real history of this biography, if not so interesting or amusing, at least possesses the merit of greater accuracy. I was first drawn to Shaw, not because he was a Socialist, a publicist, an economist. I was concerned with neither his fame nor his obscurity. I had seen his plays produced in America, had followed the ups and downs of his career as a dramatist, and was marking the rise of his star successively in Austria and Germany. The Shaw who caught and held my interest was the dramatist of a new type. I planned writing a brief study of Bernard Shaw and his plays less comprehensive in scope even than the subsequent studies of Holbrook Jackson, Gilbert Chesterton and Julius Bab. Mr. Shaw furnished me with a brief outline of his career and I set to work. After studying his works for some months, I sent a series of queries to Mr. Shaw. Fear fell upon me when, some time later, I received from him a card saying that he had only come to the forty-first page of his reply; and he assured me that if this business was to come off, it might as well be done thoroughly. Fear was turned to consternation when the big budget finally arrived. "I knew that you thought you were dealing simply with a new dramatist," wrote Mr. Shaw, "whereas, to myself, all the fuss about Candida was only a remote ripple from the splashes I made in the days of my warfare long ago. I do not think what you propose is important as *my* biography, but a thorough biography of any man who is up to the chin in the life of his time as I have been is worth writing as a historical document; and, therefore, if you still care to face it, I am willing to give you what help I can. Indeed, you can force my hand to some extent, for any story that you start will pursue me to all eternity; and if there *is* to be a biography, it is worth my while to make it as accurate as possible."

In this way my original plan was developed and expanded. Mr. Shaw's abundant sympathy and encouragement; the overflowing measure of material afforded me; the insight into a life and a period of tremendous significance and vitality; all these

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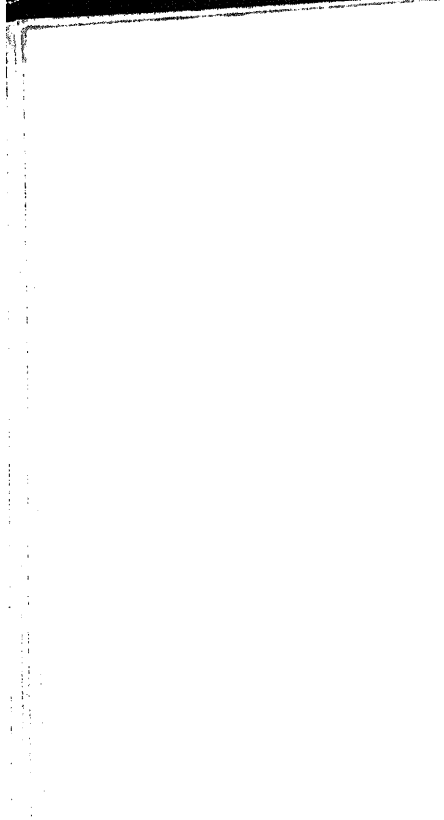
of all the moments of the best part of the XIX. century
in order, with my little about me formerly in it. I know
that you are dealing simply with a "man" character, drawn
to myself, all the for about Charles. was only a most
affair from the friends. I made in the days of my confusion
long ago. I do not think what you prefer a important as my
biography, but a through biography of my own life is up
to the end in the life of his own time as I have done
a worth writing as a historical document, and therefore if you
still care to find it I am willing to give you what help I
can. I think you can find my hand to come what, for my story
that you still will find me to all study, and if there is to
be a biography it is with my will to make it as complete as
possible.

Yours faithfully

Edmund Wilson

As I have just found in old photograph, taken in 1860, of my father
my mother, he is the other, taken by Richard Dyer, the former friend
of the Lowell letters. I will reply to you if you are curious about it.

(Chicago 19/10/18)



AUTHOR'S INTRODUCTION

combined to offer an opportunity not to be neglected. My interest in the subject deepened with my knowledge. It became my aim to write—not a Rougon-Macquart history of modern thought in twenty volumes—but an account of the movements of a most interesting period, the last quarter of the nineteenth and the opening decade of the twentieth centuries, *à propos* of Bernard Shaw. As the work progressed, Shaw warned me—and the reporters—that in attempting his biography I had undertaken a “terrific task,” an opinion endorsed by others. I remember one day being introduced to Mr. Bram Stoker as Bernard Shaw’s biographer; whereupon he remarked with genuine feeling in his tone: “I can only say that you have my profoundest sympathy!” Soon after I had fairly embarked upon the undertaking, in fact, Shaw pointed out to me its magnitude. “I want you to do something that will be useful to yourself and to the world,” he wrote in February, 1905; “and that is, to make me a mere peg on which to hang a study of the last quarter of the nineteenth century, especially as to the collectivist movement in politics, ethics and sociology; the Ibsen-Nietzschean movement in morals; the reaction against the materialism of Marx and Darwin; the Wagnerian movement in music; and the anti-romantic movement (including what people call realism, materialism and impressionism) in literature and art.”

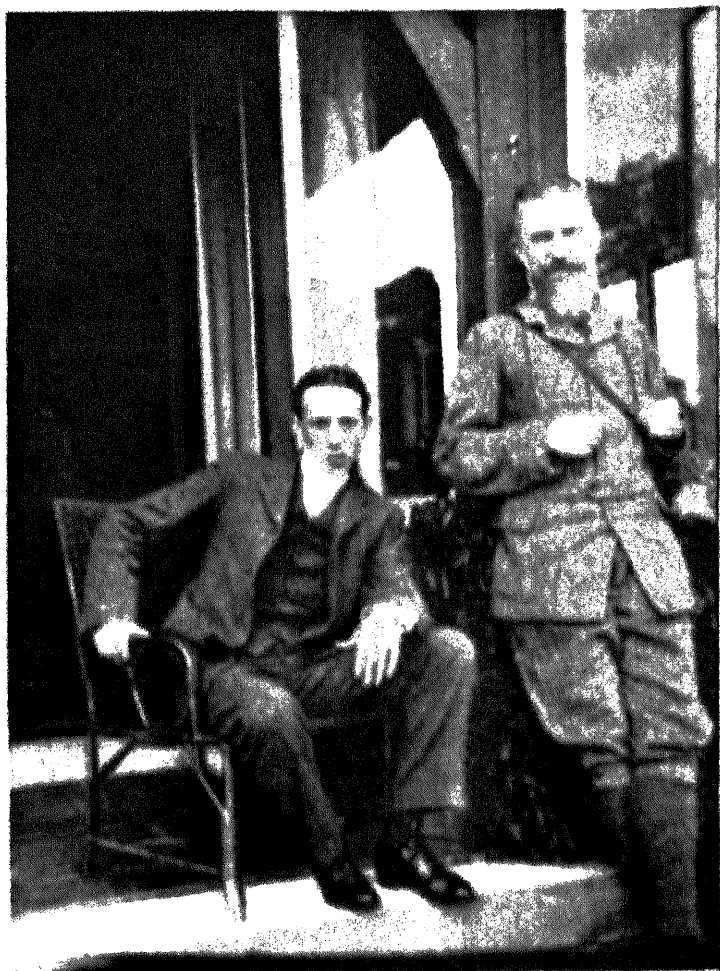
During the progress of the work I beheld Shaw conquer America, then Germany, then England, and, lastly, the Scandinavian countries and Continental Europe. I realized that my subject, beginning as a somewhat obscure Irish author, had thrown off the garb of submerged renown, taken the public by storm, and become the most universally popular living dramatist, and the most frequently paragraphed man in the world. No British dramatist—not even Shakespeare!—had conquered the world during his lifetime; yet Shaw, just past fifty, had succeeded in turning this cosmic trick. Clippings, pictures, journals and books poured in upon me from every quarter of the globe. I discovered that Shaw was a man with a past as well as a genius with a future, and I realized the truth of his cryptic boast that

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Now and then, to relieve the burden of my thoughts, I would write an essay for some German, French, or American review. But I only met with base ingratitude from the subject of the essay. "Your articles have been a most fearful curse to me," Mr. Shaw wrote me on one occasion, after the appearance of an article in which I had referred to his unobtrusive philanthropy. "For instance, the day before yesterday I got a typical letter. The writer has nine children; has lost his wife suddenly, and was on the point of shooting himself in desperation for want of fifteen pounds to get him out of his difficulties, when he happened to come on a copy of your article. He instantly felt that here was the man to give him the fifteen pounds and save his life. He is only one out of a dozen who have had the same idea. I shall refer them all to you with assurances that you have read your own character into mine, and are a man with a feeling heart, a full pocket, and a ready hand to give to the afflicted."

When the book was well under way, I came to England, at Mr. Shaw's invitation, to "study my subject." My views of his work and genius remained fundamentally the same, though the personal contact with one of the most vivid and remarkable personalities of our time, quite naturally brought about some marked modifications of my more remote impressions, and corrected some of the minor misunderstandings which are inevitable in the absence of a personal acquaintance. Many passages in his works, many phases of his personality, hitherto obscure or incomprehensible, became clear to me. I learned the meaning of his plays, the purport of his philosophy, and the objects of his life not from my viewpoint alone, but from his own. In the quiet of Ayot, we read and discussed together the portion of the biography then written. With frequent criticism and comment Mr. Shaw helped me to a new and larger comprehension of his life and work.

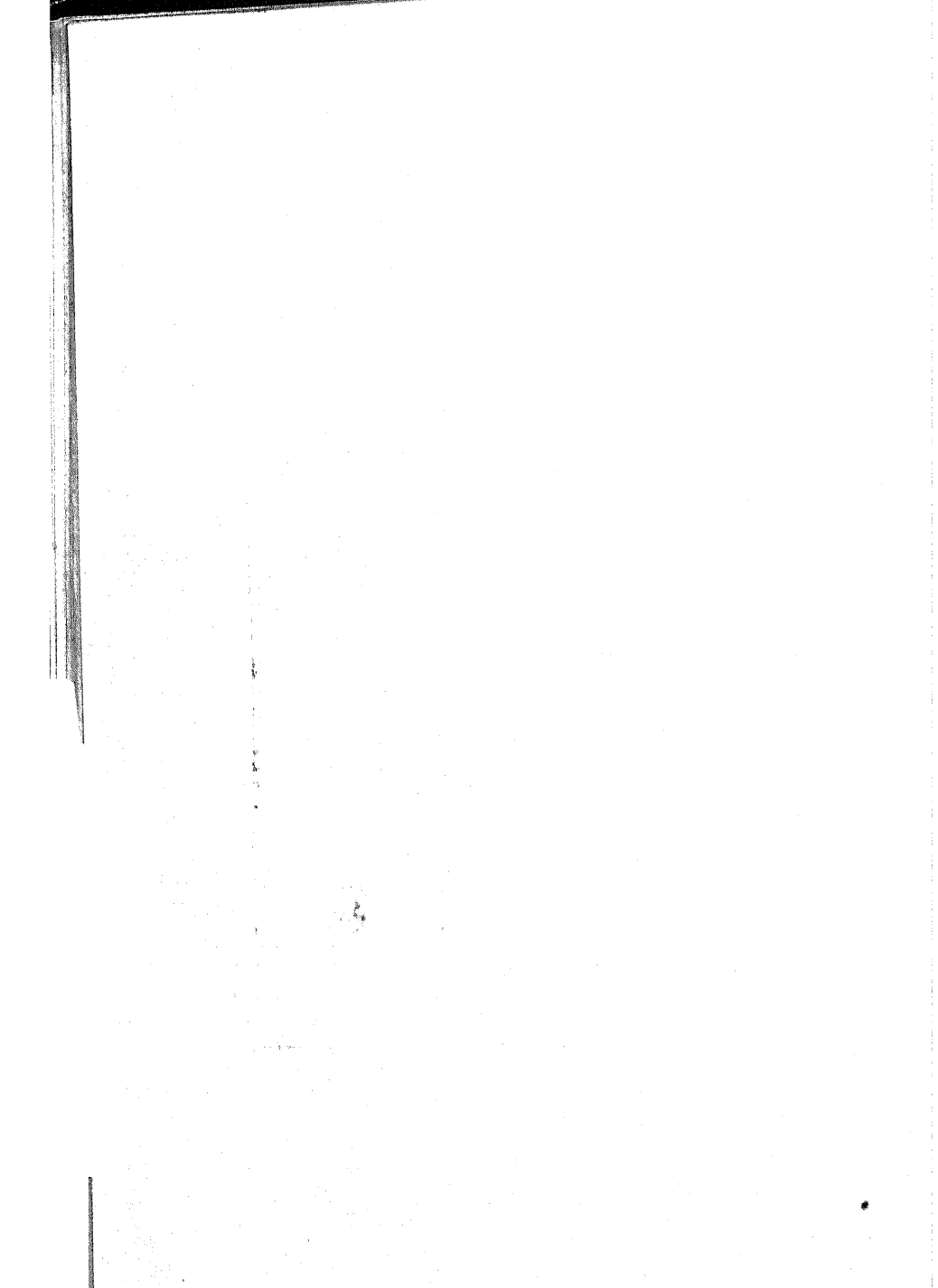
On my return to America I once more approached my task—this time with the illumination of personal acquaintance and with the deeper



STRAW AND THE DISMEMBERED

April 24, 1902, at the residence of the author, July 1902

Photo. & photograph. taken by Mrs. Howard Shaw



AUTHOR'S INTRODUCTION

tally with my own. The biography was now written finally, from the first chapter to the last.

One who has pursued the errant course of a Will-o'-the-wisp may understand somewhat of my effort to follow the devious route of G. B. S. With interest, though I confess at times with dwindling patience, I have followed the lure of that occasionally somewhat impishly un-kindly light, "o'er moor and fen, o'er crag and torrent," till after the fashion of his kind, he abandoned me, wayfaring, on the brink of the abyss to save my neck as best I might. Which things are a parable.

Characteristically, and, it must be admitted, in a sense justly, he remarks that a biography of a living man cannot be finished till he is dead, or words to that effect. But the chances there are against the Biographer as well as the Biographed; and I have no fancy, I confess, that the book should be, as he once maliciously prophesied, "a posthumous work for both of us," nor that he should be justified in his presentiment that we should "both die the moment we finished it."

While nothing but death can fitly end a man's life, being no Boswell, and having my own life to attend to as well as his, I have brought these "twenty volumes" to a close. A man who has already, by his own account, "lived three centuries," is as likely to live three more; but it is less probable that I shall see the end of them. So I take Time by the forelock and write *finis* to a contribution which can only hope to cover the first three centuries.

"Who is to tackle Mr. Bernard Shaw," Mr. Augustine Birrell once asked, "and assign to him his proper place in the providential order of the world?" This work is in no sense an effort to assign to Bernard Shaw his "proper place in the providential order of the world." Such a task it is impossible to accomplish so long as Shaw lives to belie it. No more is it possible to say the final word about any genius in mid-career with limitless possibilities before him. Shaw's masterpiece—even a series of masterpieces!—perhaps remains to be written. His career may have only just begun.

This book is designed to give an authoritative account, biographical and critical, of Bernard Shaw's work, art, philosophy

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and life up to the present time. Perhaps its appearance is not premature. Shaw has suffered no little from the Shavians. He has served more than once as an excuse for propaganda and counter-propaganda. But save for one or two glaring exceptions, the fatuities of the cult, and the image of the shrine and burning candles have in large measure vanished—it is hoped, to return no more. The time seems ripe for conscientious and thoughtful consideration of the man and his work, in relation to the thought movement of our time—irrespective of political bias and personal prejudice. Perhaps the portrait, though neither “disparaging” nor “unflattering,” may present the “real Shaw,” if more “unexpectedly,” perhaps no less truly, in that I am “a stranger to the Irish-British environment.”

If I have succeeded in removing a legendary figure from the atmosphere of contemporary mythology, and in portraying the real man in the light of common day, then an earnest search for the *aurea media* of true criticism will not have proved wholly fruitless. I hope I may have succeeded, in some adequate degree, in exhibiting, in their true colours, what Mr. Gilbert Chesterton once justly described to me in a letter as “that humour and that courage which have cleansed so much of the intellect of to-day.”

PREFACE

I HAVE neither space nor words to express, in full measure, my gratitude and indebtedness to the many friends, critics, scholars and men of letters who have aided me in the preparation of this work. First of all I wish to thank Mr. Shaw himself for his assistance. The voluminous correspondence filled with criticism, exposition and reminiscence; the immense trouble taken in placing ample materials at my disposal; the personal assistance in detailed discussion of the work—will have made this work possible. For the views expressed in this biography Mr. Shaw is in no sense responsible. On many points we are in hearty disagreement. At this place, I take pleasure in expressing my indebtedness to Mrs. Shaw, for kind assistance and helpful suggestions.

Valuable assistance, especially in connection with the earlier stages of Shaw's career as a dramatist, was derived from Mr. William Archer's collection of Shaviana, which he freely and most generously placed at my disposal. The chapter on Shaw as a critic of music I could not have written without the articles lent me by Mr. Archer. I am likewise greatly indebted to Mr. Holbrook Jackson, who gave me free access to his collection of Shaviana, and lent me valuable material hitherto unknown to me, or inaccessible. During the entire course of the preparation of the present work, I have received the counsel and aid of that scholarly student of the drama, Mr. James Platt White, of Buffalo, New York, who freely placed the services of himself and his fine library of dramatic literature at my disposal.

To certain able students of Shaw's work, some of them not known to me personally, and also to a few personal friends, I am also especially indebted. To Mr. John Corbin, Professor William Lyon Phelps and Professor E. E. Hale, Jr., in connection with the chapters treating of the plays; to Mr. James Hunsker, in connection with the chapter treating of Shaw as a

PREFACE

critic of music; to the late Mr. Samuel L. Clemens and to Dr. C. Alphonso Smith in connection with other critical and biographical chapters—for reading these portions of the work, for helpful criticism in some instances, for the loan of material in others, to all my thanks are gratefully accorded. Needless to say, they are in no wise responsible for any faults or errors of mine. In various ways, in lesser degree, I am indebted to Miss Sally Fairchild, Mr. Henry George, Jr., Mr. J. T. Grein and Mr. Austin Lewis.

Of foreign critics, I wish especially to thank M. Augustin Hamon, the French translator of Shaw's works, for his interesting suggestions, his numerous acts of kindness, and for the rich mass of documents embodying the continental criticism of Shaw with which he has kept me supplied; and Herr Siegfried Trebitsch, of Vienna, the German translator of Shaw's works, for detailed information in regard to Shaw's position and recognition in German Europe. I cannot permit myself to omit from the list of those to whom I am especially indebted the names of M. Jean Blum, formerly Professor at the Lycée, Oran, Algeria; Herr Heinrich Stümcke, editor of *Hahn und Welt*; Professor Paul Haensel, of the University of Moscow; Dr. Julius Brouté, of Madrid, the Spanish translator of Shaw's works; Herr Hugo Vallentin, the Swedish translator of Shaw's works; Mr. J. M. Borup, the Danish translator of Shaw's works; Baron Reinhold von Willebrand, editor of the *Finsk Tidkrift*, Helsingfors, Finland; M. Auguste Filon, now resident in England, I believe; and Dr. Georg Brandes, of Copenhagen. In the text of the present work, or in footnotes, I trust I have not failed to express my indebtedness to everyone, not heretofore mentioned, who, in one way or another, has aided me in the present work. I should, however, like to acknowledge here my indebtedness to the officials of the Library of Congress, Washington, D. C., of the British Museum, and of the Cambridge University Library, for their unfailing courtesy and helpfulness.

I have taken the utmost pains to include among the illustrations the most notable representations ever made of Shaw—sculpture, portrait, photograph and cartoon. Moreover, the thought of presenting Shaw to the eye in the most character-

istic and representative way, as he appeared at various stages in his career, has been constantly borne in mind. My thanks are now expressed to M. Auguste Rodin for permission to reproduce a photograph of his bronze bust of Shaw, the marble replica of which, presented by Mr. Shaw, now stands in the Municipal Gallery of Modern Art, Dublin; to Prince Paul Troubetzkoy, Paris, for a photograph of his remarkable plaster bust of Shaw, said to have been made in forty minutes; to the Hon. Neville S. Lytton, for permission to reproduce his unique portrait of Mr. Shaw, after the Innocent X. of Velasquez; to Mr. Bernard Partridge for the loan of his admirable water-colour of Shaw; to Miss Jessie Holliday for the loan of her striking water-colour of Shaw, her photo-drawing of Mr. Webb, and her sketch of Mr. Archer; to Mr. Max Beerbohm and Mr. E. T. Reed for permission to reproduce cartoons of Shaw; to Mr. H. G. Wells for permission to reproduce his drawing of six Socialists; to Mr. Joseph Simpson, the artist, and Mr. J. Murray Allison, the owner, for the loan of a black-and-white wash drawing—all the best of their kind. I was so fortunate as to enlist the interest and co-operation of those two great American artist-photographers, Alvin Langdon Coburn (London) and Édouard J. Steichen (Paris). Notable portraits and pictures were taken by them especially for this work—one Lumière autochrome and four monochromes by Mr. Coburn, and two monochromes by Mr. Steichen. For permission to photograph the first and last pages of the original manuscript of *Love Among the Artists*—and also for supplying me with much other valuable material—I am indebted to Mr. D. J. Rider. I wish to express my thanks to Dr. M. L. Ettinghausen, of Munich, who secured for me many playbills of the productions of Shaw's plays in German Europe. I wish to express my thanks also to Mr. Roger Ingpen, for his assistance in the matter of illustrations. My thanks are likewise extended to the proprietors of *Punch* and *Vanity Fair* for permission to reproduce certain cartoons which originally appeared in those publications. In especial, I wish to thank Mrs. Shaw for her intelligent aid in the selection of likenesses of Mr. Shaw from his own large collection.

PREFACE

In accordance with the original plan for the biography of Mr. Shaw, the present volume was to contain an appendix, treating chronologically and critically of the production of Shaw's plays throughout the world, from the inception of his career as a dramatist. It has proved advisable to publish this appendix later in a separate, souvenir volume, embodying the history of the dramatic movement inaugurated by Bernard Shaw. Consequently, the chapters in the present volume dealing with Shaw's plays are concerned primarily with critical discussion of the genesis and art of the plays, touching upon their production only in the most casual and adventitious way.

Mr. Shaw is fond of saying: "I am a typical Irishman; my family came from Hampshire." His lineal ancestor, Captain William Shaw, was of Scotch descent; lived in Hampshire, England; and in 1689 went to Ireland, where the family has since lived. The strains in Mr. Shaw's ancestry are so complicated and interwoven, that it has seemed important to publish a genealogical chart of the Shaw family. The researches were conducted by the expert genealogist, Rev. W. Ball Wright, M.A., Osbalwick Vicarage, York, at the instance and under the direction of Mr. Shaw himself. The chart, compiled from the data of Mr. Wright, was prepared by the experts of the Grafton Genealogical Press, New York.

To my wife, for her untiring assistance and inestimably valuable criticism, I cannot cancel my debt of gratitude by any expressions, however eloquent. I could not have written this book without her aid. It is to her intellectual directness and to her genius for suggestive criticism, that the present volume owes very much of whatever merit it may possess.

ARCHIBALD HENDERSON.

CAMBRIDGE, ENGLAND.

November 30th, 1910.

PREFACE TO THE AMERICAN EDITION

THE association of America and Bernard Shaw connotes, at the first glance, incongruity if not mutual antipathy. There is at once a suggestion of conflict between the most individualistic personality of the day and the most individualistic nation of the world. One of America's deplorable, if amiable, weaknesses is the predilection for inviting estimates of herself from supercilious people who know nothing about her. And one of Shaw's amusing idiosyncracies is his fancy for discoursing freely upon subjects of which he is pathetically ignorant. Bull-baiting is his daily pastime; but now and then he eagerly yields to the tempting invitation to take a new fling at America. So from time to time we have the diverting spectacle of a remarkably clever and shrewd Irishman making quaintly stupid and delightfully inapposite strictures upon a country he has never visited and upon a people among whom he has never lived or even sojourned.

Imagine a Martian making his first studies of the United States through the sole intermediary of the writings and discourses of Mr. Bernard Shaw. What a lurid and shocking picture would be presented to his view! The United States, thus portrayed, is a "nation of villagers," suburban in instinct and parochial in moral judgments, "overridden with old-fashioned creeds and a capitalistic religion." The Americans are an "appalling, horrible, narrow lot," and America is a "land of unthinking, bigoted persecution." The American woman is attractive, beautiful, and well-dressed—but has no soul. The American man is a machine of voluble activity without progressive impetus, whose single aim is the acquisition of wealth. America is a semi-barbaric country, incessantly shocking the world with its crass exposures of political corruption and industrial brigandage, murders, manslaughters, and lynchings, peonage, sweat-shops, child labor, and white slavery. It is fifty years behind England, and a hundred years behind Europe, in

art, literature, science, religion, and government—in a word, in civilization.

This lurid chromo, painted in crude and primary colors, is clearly the Shavian reflection of English press-opinion of America and the Americans—if it is not one of Mr. Shaw's most successful comic fictions. In whatever proportion jest and earnest may be commingled in such a comic fiction, certainly it is disappointing to find a man who has often proven himself an exceedingly clear-sighted observer and astute thinker with respect to subjects upon which he is fully informed, betray so pathetic an ignorance of the realities of American life. Mr. Shaw has been content to acquire his notions concerning America at second hand, and often at third and fourth—a method of acquiring information which is to be recommended for ease rather than for accuracy.

The English newspaper is, actually, a standing menace to perfectly equable relations between England and America. There is a yellowness of sensationalism, and there is a yellowness of deliberate misrepresentation. There is a deeper, more subtle inaccuracy than that which inheres in the distortion of facts—it is the inaccuracy which inheres in the suppression of facts. The picture of America daily presented to English eyes through the medium of the English press is a caricature—a broad, crude caricature. It is so flagrant as to lead to the lurid chromo of America achieved by Mr. Shaw. The English visitor to the United States, who gets no further than the hotels of the great cities and the rear platform of an observation car, catches only the most superficial of impressions—chiefly of the hurried metropolitan search for wealth and of the natural, still almost primitive, wildness of the landscape. England means censoriousness; and English curiosity and inquisitiveness are more than often misguided—searching into and accentuating those phases of American life and character which are most open to adverse criticism, and overlooking or ignoring those indicative features and attributes which are most suggestive in their utility and value.

In reality, England and America have much to learn from each other that will be mutually helpful and beneficial. The spirit of generosity which characterizes America in her relations

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to all the world is the significant deficiency in the English national character. America is the supreme exemplar of internationalism. America is open-mindedness, enterprise, acquisitiveness. England, as instanced most signally in her splendid public institutions, is unsparingly generous—liberally sharing her treasures with all the rest of the world. But she is deplorably retrograde, as a nation, through declining to utilize the best that is to be found in other nationalities and other civilizations. It is, perhaps, sometimes more generous to receive than to give. England austere plays the *rôle* of model to other nations; but she cannot abide to “sit at the feet of wisdom,” to appropriate for her own advancement the good and the useful in others, whosoever those others may be. England’s besetting sin of national vanity is the canker in the flower of her civilization, the ominous source of her progressive relinquishment of international supremacy.

On the other hand, America has much to learn from England, and from that phase of English spirit signally exemplified in the person of Bernard Shaw. For if he is anything, Shaw is a free thinker—in the original and entirely uncorrupted meaning of that term. His is that boundless naïveté so fertile for truth’s own discovery. Not only is he free thinker: he is equally free writer and free speaker. He says exactly what he thinks—and a good deal more. He coats the pill of the satirist with the sugar of the artist; his wit stands sponsor for his irreverence. In Nietzschean phrase, Shaw is a “good European.” He is fully abreast of the most advanced thought of Europe, and consistently maintains relations with the latest developments in the fine arts, philosophy, and sociology. For many years, he has served as a channel for the influx into English-speaking countries of the streams of European consciousness. As an original thinker, Shaw has independently arrived at many conclusions which have been more rigorously elaborated by numerous modern thinkers, from Stirner, Nietzsche and Ibsen to Maeterlinck, Bergson and James. As the literary popularizer of contemporary philosophic ideas, Bernard Shaw is one of the heralds of that steadily evolving spirit of cosmopolitan culture which bids fair to give the intellectual note of the twentieth century.

In this hour of America’s great national resurgence in the

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effort to purge the body politic of glaring social evils, it is helpful to study Bernard Shaw and to discover that his most distinctive and noteworthy service as a public character has been his splendid struggle for the inculcation of the highest ideals of unselfish public service. England far surpasses America in the relative amount of public service rendered by individuals and public organizations in behalf of the general welfare, without remuneration or the hope of remuneration. "I am of the opinion that my life belongs to the whole community," Bernard Shaw has finely declared, "and as long as I live it is my privilege to do for it whatsoever I can." Only when individual leaders of opinion in America, of which there is now no dearth, are supported everywhere by an awakened public conscience and a universally functioning spirit of individual responsibility, shall we secure throughout our country, from hamlet to metropolis, the much desiderated remedy for social abuse and the progressive perfecting of popular government.

ARCHIBALD HENDERSON.

Salisbury, N. C., September 4, 1911.

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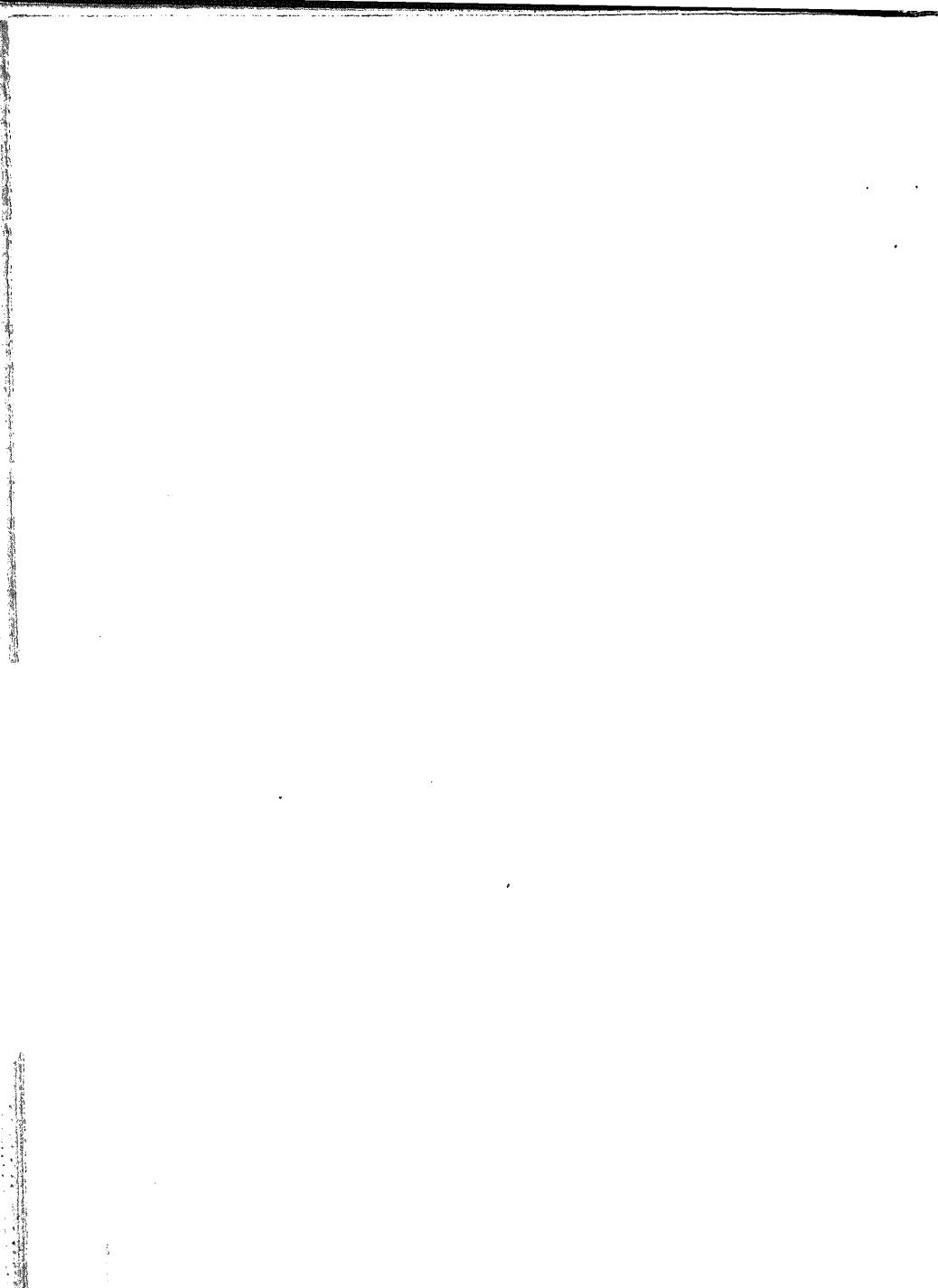
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DUBLIN DAYS

"If religion is that which binds men to one another, and irreligion that which sundereth, then must I testify that I found the religion of my country in its musical genius and its irreligion in its churches and drawing-rooms."
In the Days of My Youth. By Bernard Shaw. *Mainly About People*, 1909.



GEORGE BERNARD SHAW:

HIS LIFE AND WORKS

CHAPTER I

IT is a circumstance of no little significance that Bernard Shaw and Oscar Wilde, two dramatists whose plays have achieved so notable a success on the European stage, should both have been born in Dublin within two years of one another. It has been the good fortune of no other living British or Irish dramatist of our day to receive the enthusiastic acclaim of the most cultured public of continental Europe. What more fitting and natural than this sustention, by the countrymen of Swift and Sheridan, of the Celtic reputation for brilliancy, cleverness and wit?

George Bernard Shaw was born on July 26th, 1856—well nigh a century later than his countryman and fellow-townman, Richard Brinsley Sheridan. Only one year before, in 1855, was born Shaw's sole rival to the place of the foremost living dramatist of the United Kingdom, Arthur Wing Pinero. It is an interesting coincidence that the year which saw the demise of that "first man of his century," Heinrich Heine, also witnessed the birth of the brilliant and original spirit who is, in some sense, his natural and logical successor: Bernard Shaw. There is some suggestion of the workings of that wonderful law of compensation, which Emerson preached with such high seriousness, in this synchronous relation of birth and death, connecting Heine and Shaw. The circumstance might be said to proclaim the unbroken continuity of the comic spirit.

Bernard Shaw possesses the unique faculty of befuddling the brains of more sane writers than any other living man. The

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critic of conventional view-point is dismayed by the discovery that Shaw is bound by no conventions whatever, with the possible exception of the mechanical conventions of the stage. Shaw is essentially an intellectual, not an emotional, and the critic of large imaginative sympathy discovers in him one who on occasion disclaims the possession of imagination. To the idealist critic, Shaw is never a hero-worshipper: he is a heroism and makes game of humanity. To the analyst, with his schools, his classifications, his labellings, Shaw is an elusive and unanalyzable quantity—a fantastic original, wholly *sui generis*. With all his realism, he cannot be called an exponent of a school. It would be nearer the truth to say that he is himself a school.

It is futile to attempt to measure Shaw with the foot of prejudice or convention. Only by placing oneself exactly at his peculiar point of view and recording the impressions without prejudice, preference or caricature, can one begin to fathom the mystery of this disquieting intelligence which is mocking when most serious, most fantastic when most sober, his every word belies his intent. The antipode to the fatness of pompous dulness, his gravity is that of the masquerade, the motley, the mordant humour of the licensed fool. Contrasts between manner and meaning, between method and essence constitute the real secret of his career. The truly novel consideration is not that Shaw is incorrigibly fantastic and frivolous; the alarming fact is that he is remarkably direct and profoundly in earnest. The willingness of the public to accept the artist at his face value blinds its eyes to the almost grim, seriousness of the man. The great central fact of his life is that he has used the artistic humour to conceal the unswerving purpose of the humanist and social reformer. The story of the career of George Bernard Shaw, in whom is found the almost unprecedented combination of the most brilliantly whimsical humour with the most direct and vital purpose, has already, even in our time, somewhat of the character of a legend. It might become a story, in very fact, if we did not finally determine to associate it in printed form with the life of our time.

How to write the biography of so complex a nature? The greatest living English dramatic critic once confessed that he never approached a more difficult task than that of interpretation of Shaw's plays. One of Shaw's most intimate friends once suggested that the title of his biography would probably be "The Court Jester who was Hanged."

A few years ago, in discussing with me the plan of his biography, Mr. Shaw suggested for it the euphonious if journalistic title—*G. H. S. Biography and Autobiography*. Though the book as a whole is not developed along the lines originally suggested sufficiently to render that title truly applicable, for this first chapter surely none could be more suitable. These "Dublin Days" have been reproduced by Shaw with much amplitude, and more or less precision; so that, accepting Shaw's definition of Autobiography and mine of Biography, the result will be a narrative of much falsehood and perhaps a little truth.

"All autobiographies are lies," is Shaw's fundamental thesis. "I do not mean unconscious, unintentional lies; I mean deliberate lies. No man is bad enough to tell the truth about himself during his lifetime, involving, as it must, the truth about his family and friends and colleagues. And no man is good enough to tell the truth in a document which he suppresses until there is nobody left alive to contradict him." "The true, the real autobiography will never be written; no man, no woman—Rousseau, Marie Bashkirtseff?—ever dared to write it. Were one to attempt to write the book entitled, *My Heart Laid Bare*, as Poe says somewhere in his *Marginalia*, "the paper would shrivel and blaze at every touch of the fiery pen." Shaw once "tried the experiment, within certain limits, of being candidly autobiographical." He produced no permanent impression, because nobody ever believed him; but the extent to which he stood compromised with his relations may well be imagined. His few confidential reminiscences won him the reputation of being the "most reckless liar in London"; they reeked too strongly of the diabolism mentioned by Poe. And yet we must accept Shaw's comically irreverent autobiographical details, in view of his assertion that they are attempts at genuine autobiography.

In the autobiographical accounts of his youth and early life,

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as well as in many conversations on the subject with Mr. Shaw, I have discovered ample explanation of his scepticism concerning the binding ties of blood, of the strangely unsympathetic, even hostile, relations between parents and children displayed throughout his entire work. These autobiographical accounts reveal on his part less filial affection than a sort of comic disrespect for the mistakes, faults and frailties of his parents and relatives.

Mr. Shaw's grandfather was a Dublin notary and stockbroker, who left a large family unprovided for at his death. George Carr Shaw, his son and Bernard Shaw's father, was an Irish Protestant gentleman; his rank—a very damnable one in his son's eyes—was that of a poor relation of that particular grade of the *haute bourgeoisie* which makes strenuous social pretensions. He had no money, it seems, no education, no profession, no manual skill, no qualification of any sort for any definite social function. Moreover, he had been brought up "to believe that there was an inborn virtue of gentility in all Shaws, since they revolved impecuniously in a sort of vague second cousinship round a baronetcy." His people, who were prolific and numerous, always spoke of themselves as "the Shaws" with an intense sense of their own importance—as one would speak of the Hohenzollerns or the Romanoffs. An amiable, but timid man, the father's worst faults were inefficiency and hypocrisy. His son could only say of him that he might have been a weaker brother of Charles Lamb. Proclaiming, and half believing, himself a teetotaller, he was in practice often a furtive drinker. The one trait of his which was reproduced in his son, his antithesis in almost every other respect, was a sense of humour, an appreciation of the comic force of anti-climax. "When I was a child, he gave me my first dip in the sea in Killiney Bay," writes his son. "He prefaced it by a very serious exhortation on the importance of learning to swim, culminating in these words: 'When I was a boy of only fourteen, my knowledge of swimming enabled me to save your Uncle Robert's life.' Then, seeing that I was deeply impressed, he stooped, and added confidentially in my ear: 'And, to tell the truth, I never was so sorry for anything in my life afterwards.' He then plunged into the

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ocean, enjoyed a thoroughly refreshing swim, and chuckled all the way home."

All the Shaws, because of that remote baronetcy, Mr. Shaw once gravely assured me, considered it the first duty of a respectable Government to provide them with sinecures. After holding a couple of clerkships, Shaw's father, by some means, finally asserted his family claim on the State with sufficient success to attain a post in the Four Courts—the Dublin Courts of Justice. This post in the Civil Service must have been a gross sinecure, for by 1850 it was abolished, and he was pensioned off. He then sold his small pension and went into business as a wholesale dealer in corn, a business of which he had not the slightest knowledge. "I cannot begin, like Ruskin, by saying that my father was an entirely honest merchant," said his son in one of his autobiographical confidences. "I don't know whether he was or not, I do know that he was an entirely unsuccessful one." In addition to a warehouse and office in the city, he had a flour mill at a place called Dolphin's Barn, a few miles out. This mill, attached to the business as a matter of ceremony, perhaps paid its own rent, since the machinery was generally in motion. But its chief use, according to Bernard Shaw, "was to amuse me and my boon companions, the sons of my father's partner."

When he was about forty years of age, Shaw's father married Lucinda Elizabeth Gurly, the daughter of a country gentleman. Students in eugenics might find in their disparity in age—a difference of twenty years—some explanation of the singular qualities and unique genius of their son. The estate in Carlow, now owned by Mr. Shaw, descended to him from his maternal grandfather, Walter Bagnal Gurly, through his mother's brother. Miss Gurly was brought up with extreme severity by her maternal aunt, Ellen Whitcroft, a sweet faced lady, with a deformed back and a ruthless will, who gave her niece the most rigorous training, with the intention of subsequently leaving her a fortune. The result of this course of education upon Miss Gurly was ignorance alike of the value of money and of the world, her marriage, hastily contracted when her home was made uncomfortable for her by her father's second marriage, gave her a sufficient knowledge of both. Her aunt, angered by

this unexpected and vexatious conduct on the part of this absurdly inexperienced young woman, her erstwhile paragon and *protégée*, summarily disinherited her. In many ways, Miss Gurly's marriage proved a disappointment. Her husband, one of the most impecunious of men, was far too poor to enable her to live on the scale to which she had been accustomed. Indeed, he was anything but a satisfactory husband for a clever woman. It was in her music that Mrs. Shaw found solace and comfort—a refuge from domestic disappointment.

The formative influences of Shaw's early life were of a nature to inculcate in him that disbelief in popular education, that disrespect for popular religion, and that contempt for social pretensions which are so deeply ingrained in his work and character. Is it any wonder, after his youthful experience with orthodox religion, that, like Tennyson, he cherished a contempt for the God of the British: "an immeasurable clergyman"? In his own perverse and brilliant way, he has told us the history of his progressive revolt against the religious standards of his family:

"I believe Ireland, as far as the Protestant gentry are concerned, to be the most irreligious country in the world. I was christened by my uncle; and as my godfather was intoxicated and did not turn up, the sexton was ordered to promise and vow in his place, precisely as my uncle might have ordered him to put more coals on the vestry fire. I was never confirmed, and I believe my parents never were either. The seriousness with which English families take this rite, and the deep impression it makes on many children, was a thing of which I had no conception. Protestantism in Ireland is not a religion; it is a side in political faction, a class prejudice, a conviction that Roman Catholics are socially inferior persons, who will go to hell when they die, and leave Heaven in the exclusive possession of ladies and gentlemen. In my childhood I was sent every Sunday to a Sunday school where genteel children repeated texts, and were rewarded with little cards inscribed with other texts. After an hour of this, we were marched into the

adjoining church, to sitget there until our neighbours must have wished the service over as heartily as we did. I suffered this, not for my salvation, but because my father's respectability demanded it. When we went to live in the country, remote from social criticism, I broke with the observance and never resumed it.

"What helped to make this 'church' a hot bed of all the social vices was that no working folk ever came to it. In England the clergy go among the poor, and sometimes do try desperately to get them to come to church. In Ireland the poor are Catholics—'Papists,' as my Orange grandfather called them. The Protestant Church has nothing to do with them. Its snobbery is quite unmitigated. I cannot say that in Ireland every man is the worse for what he calls his religion. I can only say that all the people I knew were."

One must beware of the error of exaggerating the influence of Puritanism upon Shaw's character in his youth. Mr. Shaw has laughed consummely at Mr. Chesterton for speaking of his "narrow, Puritan home." A little incident may serve to reflect the tone of the heated religious controversies that went on in Mr. Shaw's home when he was a lad. Shaw's father, one of his maternal uncles, and a visitor engaged one day in a discussion over the raising of Lazarus. Mr. Shaw held the evangelical view: that it took place exactly as described. The visitor was a pure sceptic, and dismissed the story as manifestly impossible. But Shaw's uncle described it as a put-up job, in which Jesus had made a confederate of Lazarus—had made it worth his while, or asked him for friendship's sake to pretend he was dead and at the proper moment to pretend to come to life. "Now imagine me as a little child," said Shaw in narrating the story, "in my 'narrow, Puritan home,' listening to this discussion. I listened with very great interest, and I confess to you that the view which recommended itself most to me was that of my maternal uncle, and I think, on reflection, you will admit that that was the right and healthy point of view for a boy to take, because my maternal uncle's view appealed to a sense of humour,

which is a very good thing and a very human thing, whereas the other two views—one appealing to my mere credulity and the other to mere scepticism—really did not appeal to anything at all that had any genuine religious value. . . . Now that was really the tone of religious controversy at that time, and it almost always showed us the barrenness on the side of religion very much more than it did on the side of scepticism.” This anecdote brings irresistibly to mind Mark Twain’s story of the old sea-captain who declared that Elijah had won out in the altar contest, not because of his superiority over the other prophets, or of his God to theirs, but because, under the pretence that it was water, he had had the foresight to inundate his altar with—petroleum!

A short while after he entered a land office in Dublin as an employee, a position secured for him by his uncle, Frederick Shaw, a high official in the Valuation Office, it was discovered that the young Shaw, then in his teens, instead of being an extremely correct Protestant and churchgoer, was actually what used to be known in those days as an “infidel.” Many were the arguments, on the subject of religion and faith, that arose among the employees of the firm, arguments that usually went hard for young Shaw, the novice, untrained in dialectic. “What is the use of arguing,” one of the apprentices, Humphrey Lloyd, said to Shaw one day, “when you don’t know what a syllogism is?” As he once told me, Mr. Shaw promptly went and found out what it was, learning, like Molière’s hero, that he had been making syllogisms all his life without knowing it. Mr. Uniacke Townshend, Shaw’s employer, a pillar of the church—and of the Royal Dublin Society—so far respected his freedom of conscience as to make no attempt to reason with him, only imposing the condition that the subject be not discussed in the office. Although secretly chafing under the restraint, young Shaw for a time honourably submitted to the stern limitation; but an outbreak of some sort was inevitable. The immediate occasion of his first alarming appearance in print was the visit of the American evangelists, Moody and Sankey, to Dublin. Their arrival in Great Britain created a considerable sensation, and young Shaw went to hear them when they came to Dublin.

Not only was he wholly unmoved by their eloquence, but he actually felt bound to inform the public that, if this were Religion, then he was, on the whole, an Atheist. Imagine the extreme horror of his numerous uncles when they read his letter, solemnly printed in *Public Opinion*.^{*} These evangelistic services, he maintained, "were not of a religious, but a secular, not to say profane, character." Further, he said: "Respecting the effect of the revival on individuals I may mention that it has a tendency to make them highly objectionable members of society, and induces their unconverted friends to desire a speedy reaction, which either soon takes place or the revived one relapses slowly into his previous benighted condition as the effect fades, and although many young men have been snatched from careers of dissipation by Mr. Moody's exhortations, it remains doubtful whether the change is not merely in the nature of the excitement rather than in the moral nature of the individual."

The complete story of his "honest doubts," and his conscientious revolt against the hollowness and inhuman frigidity of the religion he saw practised around him, he has related in the most ludicrously irreverent vein:

"When I was a little boy, I was compelled to go to church on Sunday; and though I escaped from that intoler-

^{*} This letter, signed "N," appeared in *Public Opinion* on April 2d, 1875. It is a criticism of the methods adopted by Messrs. Moody and Hanky, and an attempt to show that the enormous audiences drawn to the evangelistic services were not proof of their efficacy. Shaw then proceeds to explain the motives which induced many people to attend, predominant among them being "the curiosity excited by the great reputation of the evangelists and the stories, widely circulated, of the summary annihilation by epilepsy and otherwise of sceptics who had openly proclaimed their doubts of Mr. Moody's divine mission." This letter has been reprinted in *Public Opinion*, November 9th, 1907.

In his monograph on Shaw (pp. 42-3), Mr. Holbrook Jackson has pointed out that this was not Shaw's first bid for publicity. In the *Cassidville Magazine* of September, 1871, there appeared among the Editorial Replies the following: "G. B. Shaw, Torra Cottage, Torra Hill, Dalkey, Co. Dublin, Ireland.—You should have registered your letter; such a combination of wit and satire ought not to have been conveyed at the ordinary rate of postage. As it was, your arguments were so weighty, we had to pay *freepence* extra for them."

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erable bondage before I was ten, it prejudiced me so violently against church-going that twenty years elapsed before, in foreign lands and in pursuit of works of art, I became once more a church-goer. To this day, my flesh creeps when I recall that genteel suburban Irish Protestant church, built by Roman Catholic workmen who would have considered themselves damned had they crossed its threshold afterwards. Every separate stone, every pane of glass, every fillet of ornamental ironwork—half dog-collar, half-coronet—in that building must have sowed a separate evil passion in my young heart. Yes; all the vulgarity, savagery, and bad blood which has marred my literary work, was certainly laid upon me in that house of Satan! The mere nullity of the building could make no positive impression on me; but what could, and did, were the unnaturally motionless figures of the congregation in their Sunday clothes and bonnets, and their set faces, pale with the malignant rigidity produced by the suppression of all expression. And yet these people were always moving and watching one another by stealth, as convicts communicate with one another. So was I. I had been told to keep my restless little limbs still all through the interminable hours; not to talk; and, above all, to be happy and holy there and glad that I was not a wicked little boy playing in the fields instead of worshipping God. I hypocritically acquiesced; but the state of my conscience may be imagined, especially as I implicitly believed that all the rest of the congregation were perfectly sincere and good. I remember at the time dreaming one night that I was dead and had gone to Heaven. The picture of Heaven which the efforts of the then Established Church of Ireland had conveyed to my childish imagination, was a waiting-room with walls of pale sky-coloured tabbiset, and a pew-like bench running all round, except at one corner, where there was a door. I was, somehow, aware that God was in the next room, accessible through the door. I was seated on the bench with my ankles tightly interlaced to prevent my legs dangling, behaving myself with all my might before the grown-up

people, who all belonged to the Sunday congregation, and were either sitting on the bench as if at church or else moving solemnly in and out as if there were a dead person in the house. A grimly handsome lady, who usually sat in a corner seat near me in church, and whom I believed to be thoroughly conversant with the arrangements of the Almighty, was to introduce me presently into the next room - a moment which I was supposed to await with joy and enthusiasm. Really, of course, my heart sank like lead within me at the thought; for I felt that my feeble affectation of piety could not impose on Omniscience, and that one glance of that all-searching eye would discover that I had been allowed to come to Heaven by mistake. Unfortunately for the interest of this narrative, I woke, or wandered off into another dream, before the critical moment arrived. But it goes far enough to show that I was by no means an insusceptible subject; indeed, I am sure, from other early experiences of mine, that if I had been turned loose in a real church, and allowed to wander and stare about, or hear noble music there instead of that most accursed 'Te Deum' of Jackson's and a senseless droning of the 'Old Hundredth,' I should never have seized the opportunity of a great evangelical revival, which occurred to me when I was still in my teens, to begin my literary career with a letter to the Press, announcing with inflexible materialistic logic, and to the extreme horror of my respectable connections, that I was an atheist. When, later on, I was led to the study of the economic basis of the respectability of that and similar congregations, I was immensely relieved to find that it represented a mere phase of industrial confusion, and could never have substantiated its claims to my respect, if, as a child, I had been able to bring it to book. To this very day, whenever there is the slightest danger of my being mistaken for a votary of the blue tabbiset waiting-room or a supporter of that morality in which wrong and right, base and noble, evil and good, really mean nothing more than the kitchen and the drawing-room,

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I hasten to claim honourable exemption, as atheist and socialist, from any such complicity." *

The lesson of the selfishness and insincerity of society ineradicably impressed upon Ibsen's mind in his childhood days is paralleled by a similar experience in the youth of Shaw. The ingrained snobbery of society as he saw it, the contempt for those lower in social pretensions, if not in social station, revolted the lad's whole nature. He soon became animated with a Carlylean contempt for the snobbery of "respectability in its thousand gigs." As in the case of the disconsolate Stendhal, Shaw was not long in discovering that his family revered what he despised, and detested what he enthusiastically admired. An incident he relates, in illustration of this trait in his father, serves in great measure to explain Shaw's scorn, in after life, of the blandishments of the drawing-room, his intolerance of fashionable society.

"One evening I was playing on the street with a school-fellow of mine, when my father came home. He questioned me about this boy, who was the son of a prosperous ironmonger. The feelings of my father, who was not prosperous and who sold flour by the sack, when he learned that his son had played on the public street with the son of a man who sold nails by the pennyworth in a shop are not to be described. He impressed on me that my honour, my self-respect, my human dignity, all stood upon my determination not to associate with persons engaged in retail trade. Probably this was the worst crime my father ever committed. And yet I do not see what else he could have taught me, short of genuine republicanism, which is the only possible school of good manners.

"Imagine being taught to despise a workman, and to respect a gentleman, in a country where every rag of excuse for gentility is stripped off by poverty! Imagine being

* On *Going to Church*. This essay appeared originally in the *Savoy Magazine*, January, 1896; it is now published in book form by John W. Luce and Co., Boston, Mass.

taught that there is one God—a Protestant and a perfect gentleman—keeping Heaven select for the gentry; and an idolatrous impostor called the Pope, smoothing the bellward way for the mass of the people, only admissible into the kitchens of most of the aforesaid gentry as ‘thorough servants’ (general servants) at eight pounds a year! Imagine the pretensions of the English peerage on the incomes of the English lower middle class. I remember Stopford Brooke one day telling me that he discerned in my books an intense and contemptuous hatred for society. No wonder! though, like him, I strongly demur to the usurpation of the word ‘society’ by an unsocial system of setting class against class and creed against creed.”*

As to education, in the ordinary sense, the lad had none: he never learned anything at school. He found no incentive to study under the tutelage of people who put *Cæsar* and *Horace* into the hands of small boys and expected the result to be an elegant taste and knowledge of the world. His first teacher was his uncle, the Rev. William George Carroll, Vicar of St. Bride’s, Dublin—reputed the first Protestant clergyman in Ireland to declare for Home Rule. We have one brief but comprehensive glimpse of his school life at this period of immaturity: “The word education brought to my mind four successive schools where my parents got me out of the way for half a day. In these *crèches*—for that is exactly what they were—I learned nothing. How I could have been such a sheep as to go to them, when I could just as easily have flatly refused, puzzles and exasperates me to this day. They did me a great deal of harm, and no good whatever. However, my parents thought I ought to go, being too young to have any confidence in my own instincts. So I went. And if you can in any public way convey to these idiotic institutions my hearty curse, you will relieve my feelings infinitely. . . . As a schoolboy I was incorrigibly idle and worthless. And I am proud of the fact.” In the preface to *John Bull’s Other Island*, Shaw has referred in par-

*In the *Days of My Youth*. By Bernard Shaw. *Mainly About People*, 1890.

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ticular to the Wesleyan Connexional School, now Wesley College, Dublin. Here the Wesleyan catechism was taught without protest to pupils, the majority of whom were Church (Protestant Irish) boys! So long as their sons were taught genuine Protestantism, the parents didn't bother about the particular brand. The school's most famous alumni are Sir Robert Hart and Bernard Shaw. In the school roll-book Shaw is entered for the first time as attending on April 13th, 1867. Unfortunately, only a bare record of his class marks is given. "He seems to have been generally near or at the bottom of his classes," said the principal, the Rev. William Crawford, in a letter to me of date August 6th, 1909; "but, perhaps typically of the man, he jumped up suddenly to second place once in his first quarter, and does not seem to have aspired again. He was entered in the 'First Latin Class,' I suppose the most junior division on the classical side." Shaw sat in class between a classic and a mathematician, both in after years distinguished scholars. Each did his appropriate share of young Shaw's work. In return Shaw would narrate for their delectation, according to the account of one of the twain, numerous stories from the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, in his own peculiar and inimitable vein. Shaw was only in his tenth year when he entered the Wesleyan Connexional School; and in that year Dr. H. R. Parker, of Trinity College, Dublin, was head master and Rev. T. A. McKee was governor. Apparently, no picture of the old school now exists; the new building stands near, but not on, the site of the old school.*

It might be imagined, from the evidence of Shaw's own confessions just detailed, that it was impossible for a boy who "took refuge in idleness" at school to acquire any sort of an education; but such a supposition is very wide of the mark. The discipline he received at home, the discipline of *laissez faire et laissez aller*, which might have spoiled the average boy, had just the opposite effect upon this strangely inquisitive, alarmingly self-assertive child. If he lost somewhat in youthful gentleness and tenderness, he gained greatly in manly determination and

* Compare *Jubilee of Wesley College, Dublin*, December, 1895—being a special number of the *Wesley College Quarterly*.

independence. If he was never treated as a child, at least he was let do what he liked. Thus the habit of freedom, which, as I once assured me, most Englishmen and Englishwomen of my class never acquire, came to him naturally.

One might say of Shaw's mother that she was the antithesis of Candida on the domestic plane. In many respects she was forerunner of the "new woman" of our own day—independent, self-reliant, indifferent to public opinion. She was, in her son's phrase, "constitutionally unfitted for the sentiment of childhood and motherhood", her genuine energy and talents were bestowed almost undividedly upon music. Not long after her marriage to Mr. Shaw, she became the right hand of an energetic genius, who had formed a musical society and an orchestra in Dublin. These organizations were composed wholly of amateurs and unavoidably so in view of the state of musical activity in Dublin at the time. By all the local promoters of music this energetic genius and man of successful ambitions, George John Vandeleur Lee, was held in the greatest contempt, even hatred, because he had repudiated their traditions, and thereby actually trained himself to become an effective teacher of singing. Through actual dissection, as well as by practical singing, he studied the anatomy of the throat until he was able, by watching and hearing a singer, to state with certainty the exact nature of the physical processes going on. From Haidach, an Italian opera singer, who preserved a splendid voice to a great age, he learned the secret of voice preservation. This method he taught to Mrs. Shaw so successfully that when he gave up singing, late in life, it was not because her voice failed her, but because her age made singing ridiculous.*

*Lee continued steadily to advance in his profession, becoming successively music-teacher, opera-conductor, festival conductor, and finally fashionable teacher of singing in Park Lane, London. He accomplished everything that he undertook, even conducting a Handel Festival in Dublin, participated in by Tietjens, Agnew, and other leading singers of his day. For several years he enjoyed great popularity in London as a teacher of music. When he died, quite suddenly, at his home in Park Lane, it was discovered, Shaw afterwards remarked, that he had exhausted his stock of health in his Dublin period, and that the days of his activity in London were days of progressive decay.

at the schools he had already attended. Unlike his future colleagues in dramatic criticism, William Archer and Arthur Bingham Walkley, graduates of Edinburgh and Oxford respectively, Shaw despised, half ignorantly, half penetratingly, the thought of a university education, for it seemed to him to turn out men who all thought alike and were snobs. So in 1871, at the age of fifteen, he entered the office of an Irish land agent, Mr. Charles Uniacke Townshend, and remained there until March, 1876. Perhaps the Ibsenite, the Nietzschean of after years was thus beginning a course of preliminary training: Henri Beyle used to say that to have been a banker was to have gone through the best preparatory school for philosophy. During this period Bernard Shaw lived in lodgings in Dublin with his father, who had by this time given up that furtive drinking, of which his son in after life spoke with such frank levity. The lad's salary at first was eighteen pounds a year, his position that of junior clerk. He had no fondness for his work, and took no interest in land agency; nevertheless, he made a very satisfactory clerk. At the end of about a year, a sudden vacancy occurred in the most active post in the office, that of cashier. As this involved a sort of miniature banking business for the clients, and the daily receipt and payment of all sorts of rents, interests, insurances, private allowances and so on, it was a comparatively busy post, and a position of trust besides. The junior clerk was temporarily called upon to fill the sudden vacancy pending the engagement of a new cashier of greater age and experience. He performed his numerous duties so successfully that the engagement of the new man was first delayed and then dropped. The child of fifteen, laboriously and successfully struggling to change his sloped, straggly, weak-minded handwriting into a fair imitation of his predecessor's, is father of the man of forty, carefully drawing up elaborate contracts with theatre managers, who never kept them. By this initial exhibition of enterprise, young Shaw's salary, now twenty-four pounds a year, was doubled, which meant a considerable step ahead. The clear-cut chirography of the Shaw of to-day and the neatness of arrangement so noticeable in his apartments at Adelphi Terrace are the results of his early train-

ing, indeed, he was a remarkably correct cashier and accountant, as one of Mr. Shaw's colleagues in the office once told me. While he was always ignorant of the state of his own finances, and to day troubles little about his personal accounts, he was never a farthing out in his accounts at the office.

Land agency in Ireland was, and is still, a socially pretentious business. Although the position Shaw held was regarded as a very genteel sort of post, yet to him this was no gratification, but quite the reverse. It was saturated with a class feeling for which, even at that time, he had an intense loathing. The position carried with it, nevertheless, certain obvious advantages. It secured for him the society of a set of so-called apprentices, who were, in fact, idle young gentlemen who had paid a big premium to be taught a genteel profession. Though the premium was not paid to Shaw, still he took delight in teaching his co-workers various operative *scenas*, which were occasionally in full swing when the principal or a customer would enter the office unexpectedly. On one occasion, Mr. Shaw once told me gleefully, a certain apprentice sang: "*Ah, che la morte*" in his tower—standing on the washstand with his head appearing over a tall screen—with such feeling and such obliviousness to all external events, that the whole office force was suddenly struck busy and silent by the arrival of Mr. Townshend, the senior partner, who stared, stupended, at the bleating countenance above the screen and finally fled upstairs, completely beaten by the situation. The young clerk thus found plenty of fun and diversion in his association with young men of culture and education; this did not make him hate his work any the less. His natural antipathy to respectability asserted itself very early in his career: he once said that land agency was too respectable for him. Moreover, the enforced repression concerning his religious beliefs bred in him a spirit of discontent and revolt. Although he realized that silence on the subject was undoubtedly an indispensable condition of sociability among people who disagreed strongly on such a matter, yet he chafed under the restraint. To such a restraint he felt he could never permanently submit. This incident alone would have had the ultimate effect of making him a bad employee. Fortunately for

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the world, it put land agency and business as a serious career out of the question for him. The author of *Widowers' Houses* collecting rents as a lifelong profession is a ludicrous, an incredible incongruity. Shaw retained his place simply for the sake of financial independence. When he gave up his position, his employer was sorry to lose him, and, at the request of Shaw's father, readily gave him a handsome testimonial. In speaking of the circumstance one day, Mr. Shaw told me that he was furious that such a demand should have been made. Nothing could have shown more clearly his distaste for the position he held. "Once or twice," commented Mr. Shaw, "my employer showed himself puzzled and annoyed when some accident lifted the veil for a moment and gave him a glimpse of the fact that his excellent and pecuniarily incorruptible clerk's mind and interest and even intelligence were ten thousand leagues away, in a region foreign, if not hostile." Surely this was another age of "inspired office boys." *

In 1872, Mr. Lee left Dublin for London, the joint household broke up, and all musical activity ceased. The return to a single household on Mr. Shaw's income was all but impossible, for his affairs were as unprosperous as ever. At this time there was even some question of Bernard Shaw's two sisters becoming professional singers. With characteristic energy and decisiveness, Mrs. Shaw boldly cut the Gordian knot by going to London and becoming a professional teacher of singing. This domestic *débâcle* robbed young Shaw of his mother's influence, which was always stimulating and inspiring, if somewhat indirectly and impersonally so. It deprived him also of music, which, up to that time, had been his daily food. This sudden deprivation of the solace of music came to him as a distinct surprise. He had never dreamed of such a contingency. Fortunately the piano

* In speaking of his apprenticeship as a clerk in the land office, Shaw declares: "I should have been there still if I had not broken loose in defiance of all prudence, and become a professional man of genius—a resource not open to every clerk. I mention this to show that the fact that I am not still a clerk may be regarded for the purposes of this article as a mere accident. I am not one of those successful men who can say, 'Why don't you do as I do?'"—From *Bernard Shaw as a Clerk*. By *Himself* in *The Clerk*, January, 1908.

remained. Although he had never until then touched it except to pick out a tune with one finger, he now set to work in earnest to learn the art of piano playing. It was in a spirit of desperation that he went out and bought a technical handbook of music, containing a diagram of the keyboard. No finger exercises, no *études de vélocité* for Shaw: he at once got out *Don Giovanni* and tried to play the overture! It took him ten minutes to arrange his fingers on the notes of the first chord. "What I suffered, what everybody in the house suffered, whilst I struggled on, labouring through arrangements of Beethoven's symphonies, of *Tannhäuser*, and of all the operas and oratorios I knew, will never be told." It was in vain now, he said, merely to sing: my native wood notes wild—just then breaking frightfully—could not satisfy my intense craving for the harmony which is the emotional substance of music, and for the rhythmic figures of accompaniment which are its action and movement. I had only a single splintering voice, and I wanted an orchestra." This musical starvation it was that drove him to the piano in disregard of the rights of his fellow lodgers.

"At the end of some months I had acquired a technique of my own, as a sample of which I may offer my fingering of the scale of C major. Instead of shifting my hand by turning

C D E F G A B C

the thumb under and fingering 1 2 3 1 2 3 4 5, I passed my fourth finger over my fifth,

C D E F G A B C

and played

1 2 3 4 5 4 3 2.

This method has the advantage of being applicable to all scales, diatonic or chromatic, and to this day I often fall back on it. Liszt and Chopin hit on it too, but they never used it to the extent I did. I soon acquired a terrible power of stumbling through pianoforte arrangements and vocal scores; and my reward was that I gained penetrating experiences of Victor Hugo and Schiller from Donizetti, Verdi, and Beethoven; of the Bible from Handel; of Goethe from Schumann, of Beaumarchais and Molière from

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Mozart; and of *Merimée* from Bizet, besides finding in Berlioz an unconscious interpreter of Edgar Allan Poe. When I was in the schoolboy adventure vein, I could range from Vincent Wallace to Meyerbeer; and if I felt piously and genteelly sentimental, I, who could not stand the pictures of Ary Scheffer or the genteel suburban sentiment of Tennyson and Longfellow, could become quite maudlin over Mendelssohn and Gounod. And, as I searched all the music I came across for the sake of its poetic or dramatic content, and played the pages in which I found poetry or drama over and over again, whilst I never returned to those in which the music was trying to exist ornamentally for its own sake and had no real content at all, it soon followed that when I came across the consciously perfect art work in the music dramas of Wagner, I ran no risk of hopelessly misunderstanding it as the academic musicians did. Indeed, I soon found that they equally misunderstood Mozart and Beethoven, though, having come to like their tunes and harmonies, and to understand their mere carpentry, they pointed out what they supposed to be their merits with an erroneousness far more fatal to their unfortunate pupils than the volley of half-bricks with which they greeted Wagner (who, it must be confessed, retaliated with a volley of whole ones fearfully well aimed).” *

Although he did a good deal of accompanying, especially in the days of his intimacy with the Salt family, he never really mastered the instrument. Once, in a desperate emergency, he supplied the place of the absent half of the orchestra at a performance of *Il Trovatore* at a People's Entertainment evening at the Victoria Theatre—and, luckily, came off without disaster. To-day he goes to his little Bechstein piano, a relic of the first Arts and Crafts Exhibition, and fearlessly attacks any opera or symphony. He is his own Melba, his own Plançon, too, thanks, as his wife pathetically explains, to “a remarkable power of making the most extraordinary noises with his throat.” He

* *The Religion of the Pianoforte*, in the *Fortnightly Review*, February, 1904.

even revels in the pianola! And I have shared his enjoyment in his own rendition of a Chopin nocturne upon that remarkable mechanical toy.

Bernard Shaw would have been a model young man at the desk but for the fact that, like Nathaniel Hawthorne at the Boston Custom House, like Ibsen at the apothecary's shop in Grimstad, his heart was not in the thing. "I never made a payment," he once frankly confessed to me, "without a hope or even a half resolve that I should never have to make it again. In spite of which, I was so wanting in enterprise and so shy and helpless in worldly matters (though I believe I had the air of being quite the reverse), that six months later I found myself making the payment again."

There gradually came to him a consciousness of the futility of his life, the consciousness of one who has been freed of illusion. In this young boy was none of the soft-blarney, the winning and dulcet melancholy, of the proverbial Irishman. He escaped that mystic influence of Roman Catholicism, which produces the phantast, the dreamer and the saint. Calvinism had taught him that "once a man is born it is too late to save him or damn him; you may 'educate' him and 'form his character' until you are black in the face; he is predestinate, and his soul cannot be changed any more than a silk purse can be changed into a sow's ear." In the atmosphere of the Island of the Saints—"that most mystical of all mystical things"—he learned to realize the barrenness of all else in comparison with the supreme importance of realizing the purpose of his existence on this earth.

Hence it was that his work and position finally became unbearably irksome, unendurable. London imperatively beckoned to him. That way, perhaps, lay freedom from the obsession of hated respectability, freedom from repression of his convictions, freedom for self-development and spiritual expansion. At the age of twenty, this raw Irish lad, wholly ignorant of the great world, walked out of his office, and threw himself recklessly into London. There, immediately after the death of his sister Agnes in the Isle of Wight, in 1876, he joined his mother in *la lutte*

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pour la vie.* There he was to set the crystalline intellectual clarity, the philosophic consciousness of the brilliant Celt, into sharp juxtaposition with the plodding practicality, the dogged energy of the complacent Briton. There he was to find the arena for his championship of those advanced movements in art, music, literature and politics, which give significance and character to the closing quarter of the nineteenth century.

In these early years we may discern in Shaw the gradual birth of the social consciousness, the slow unfolding of deep-rooted impulses toward individualism and self-expression. Like other boys of his day and time, Shaw melted lead on Holieve, hid rings in pancakes, and indulged in the conventional mummeries of Christmas. But to him these were dreary, silly diversions, against which his nature rebelled. He once refused to celebrate Shakespeare's birthday—for the very good reason that he had never celebrated his own. In the conventional sense, he was never "reared" at all: he simply "grew up wild." No effort was made to form his character: he developed from within, strangely aloof in spirit from the healthy gaieties of the normal lad. Thus was bred in him, even at an early age, a sort of premature asceticism which left its indelible mark upon his character. The puritanic convictions which have animated his entire life find their origin in the half-instinctive, half-enforced aloofness of his childhood days.

Shaw was not brought up, as we might expect, a Nonconformist; he was a member of the Irish Protestant Church. He rebelled against the inhuman repression, the meaningless ritualism of his church; but the influences of his home, nevertheless, left their impress upon his nature. His whole long life is an outcry of soaring individualism against repressive authority; and yet the puritan intensity in condemnation of self-indulgence, the ascetic revolt from alcoholism, speaks forth unmistakably in the humanitarian, the vegetarian, the teetotaller of a later epoch.

* Mr. Shaw's other sister, Miss Lucy Carr Shaw, was the immediate

DUBLIN DAYS

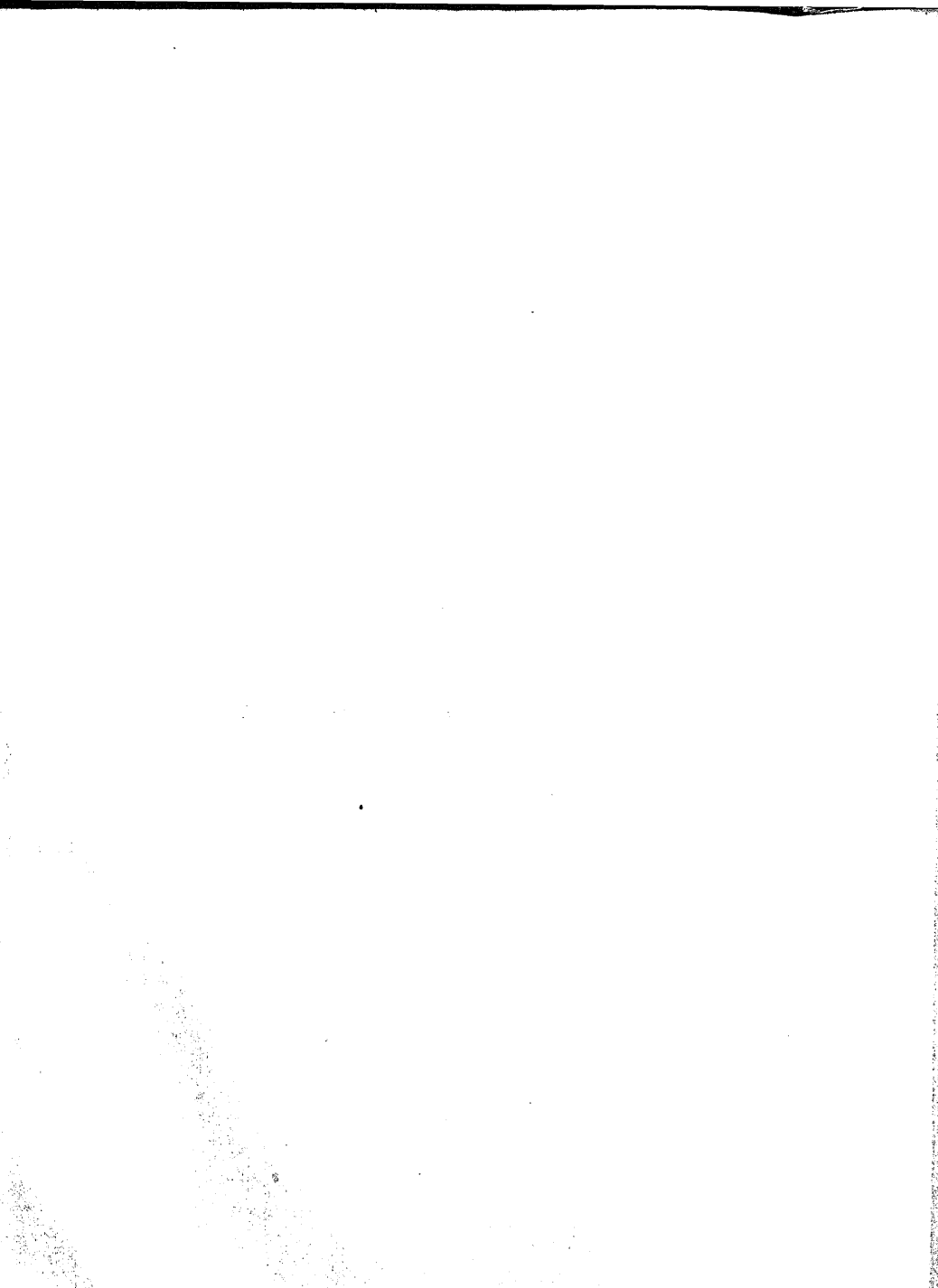
The ingrained and constitutional protestantism of his forbears found expression in his boyish, yet rigorously atheistic protest against the religion of Moody and Sankey. In this audacious protest we can scarcely expect to find any sort of matured conviction, it is the first bold denial of his life. Thus early we observe the workings of polemic, of criticism and analysis—before he had ever left Irish soil. Even then, I fancy, he felt faint stirrings of a deeper religious protestant faith. In that protest, we may discern a forecast of the *Plays for Puritans* and *The Showing up of Blanco Posnet*.

Thrown upon his own resources, sharing with his fellows none of the wholesome and joyous foolhardiness of youth, he developed a maturity of judgment, a detachment in observation, out of all proportion to his years. His puritanism expressed itself in silent condemnation of the social self righteousness he saw around him, the distinctions so sharply drawn on lines, not of individual worth, but of social station and respectability. That arresting passage in *Man and Superman* in which he describes the birth of the social passion is a piece of spiritual autobiography: it changed the child into the man. There was already at work within him the leaven of the later social revolution of our own day. Intensity of political conviction was a family tradition and heritage. In the eighteenth century a Shaw had been leader of the "Orangemen"; and in the nineteenth century one of Shaw's uncles was the first Protestant priest in Ireland who, contrary to the convictions of his companions in creed, declared himself in favour of Home Rule. By heritage, by environment, by temperament, Bernard Shaw was destined to display throughout his life that intensity of political conviction, that depth of humanitarian concern, that passion for social service which will for ever remain associated with his name.



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"My destiny was to educate London, but I had neither studied my pupil nor related my ideas properly to the common stock of human knowledge" *George Bernard Shaw: an Interview*, in *The Chap-Book*, November, 1936.



CHAPTER II

"**W**HEN did you first feel inclined to write?" Shaw was once asked. "I never felt inclined to write, any more than I ever felt inclined to breathe," was his perverse reply. "I felt inclined to draw: Michael Angelo was my boyish ideal. I felt inclined to be a wicked baritone in an opera when I grew out of my earlier impulse towards piracy and highway robbery. You see, as I couldn't draw, I was perfectly well aware that drawing was an exceptional gift. But it never occurred to me that my literary sense was exceptional. I gave the whole world credit for it. The fact is, there is nothing miraculous, nothing particularly interesting, even, in a natural faculty to the man who has it. The amateur, the collector, the enthusiast in an art, is the man who lacks the faculty for producing it. The Venetian wants to be a cavalry soldier; the Gaucho wants to be a sailor; the fish wants to fly, and the bird to swim. No, I never wanted to write. I know now, of course, the value and the scarcity of the literary faculty (though I think it over-rated); but I still don't want it." And he added: "You cannot want a thing and have it, too."

That Shaw did want to write, however, is clearly shown by the early outpourings of the artistic mood in the imaginative boy. When he was quite small, he concocted a short story and sent it to some boys' journal—something about a man with a gun attacking another man in the Glen of the Doons. In after years, spiritual adventures fired his soul; at this time, the gun was the centre of interest. The mimetic instinct of childhood in his case, however, found incentives to the development of almost every artistic faculty other than writing. His hours spent in the National Gallery of Ireland, his study of the literature of Italian art, filled him with the desire to be another Michael Angelo; but he couldn't draw. Like Browning, Shaw wished to be an artist, and, like Browning also, he wished to

be a musician. He heard music from the rising of the sun unto the going down of the same; he knew whole operas and oratorios. He wanted to be a musician, but couldn't play; to be a dramatic singer, but had no voice. The facile conqueror of every literary domain, mocked in later life with the accusation of being a sort of literary Jack-of-all-trades, was only puzzled as a youth to discover in himself a single promising potentiality.

A casual remark of an acquaintance first startled Shaw, then in his teens, into recognition of the fact that he lacked any sort of final consciousness in regard to his own position and destiny. The apprentice in the land agency office, eight or ten years Shaw's senior, who sang, "*Ah, che la morte*" with such deadly effect, one day happened to observe that every young fellow thinks that he is going to be a great man until he is twenty. "The shock that this gave me," Mr. Shaw once confessed to me with perfect naïveté, "made me suddenly aware that this was my own precise intention. But a very brief consideration reassured me—why, I don't know; for I could do nothing that gave me the smallest hope of making good my calm classification of myself as one of the world to which Shelley and Mozart and Praxiteles and Michael Angelo belonged, and as totally foreign to the plane on which land agents laboured."

In *Cashel Byron's Profession*, the hero, a prize-fighter, remarks that it is not what a man would like to do, but what he can do, that he must work at in this world. Naturally enough, Bernard Shaw, the young lad in his teens, had not yet come to any sort of artistic self-consciousness. Shaw may be said to have spent half of his life in the search for the Ultima Thule of what he *could* do. And it is by no means certain, judging from the lesson of his career, that he has yet discovered all of his capabilities. Certain it is that, at this formative stage in his career, he had found only one: the ability to keep—not to write—books. Mr. Shaw once pictured for me his state of dejection at this time over his inefficiency and incompetence. "What was wrong with me then was the want of self-respect, the diffidence, the cowardice of the ignoramus and the duffer. What saved me was my consciousness that I must learn to do something—that nothing but the possession of skill, of efficiency,

of mastery, in short, was of any use. The sort of aplomb which my cousins seemed to derive from the consciousness that their great-great-grandfather had also been the great-great-grandfather of Sir Robert Shaw, of Bushy Park, was denied to me. You cannot be imposed on by remote baronets if you belong to the republic of art. I was chronically ashamed and even miserable simply because I couldn't do anything. It is true that I could keep Mr. Townsend's cash, and that I never dreamt of stealing it; and ripper years have made me aware that many of my artistic feats may be less highly estimated in the books of the Recording Angel than this prosaic achievement; but at this time it counted for less than nothing. It was a qualification for what I hated; and the notion of my principal actually giving me a testimonial to my efficiency as a cashier drove me to an exhibition of rage that must have seemed merely perverse to my unfortunate father."

In these days of inarticulate revolt against current religious and social ideals, Shaw somehow found an outlet for that seething lava of his spirit, which was one day to burst forth with such alarming effect. This, Shaw's first published work, was the forthright letter in *Public Opinion*, in which he sought to stem the force of the first great Moody and Sankey revival by the announcement that he, personally, had renounced religion as a delusion! Besides this single public vent for his insurgency, he had found, in the friendship of a kindred spirit of imaginative temperament, the opportunity for the expression of all the doubts, hopes and aspirations of his eager and revolutionary intelligence. With one of his schoolfellows, Shaw struck up a curious friendship: this young fellow, Edward McNulty, was afterwards known as the author of *Misther O'Ryon*, *The Son of a Peasant*, and *Mourreen*,* three very original and very remarkable novels of Irish life. Both boys possessed imaginative temperaments, and their association gave promise of ripening into close and lasting friendship. But circumstances separated them so effectually that, after their schooldays, they saw very little of each other. McNulty was an official in the Bank of

* These books were published by Edward Arnold.

Ireland, and had been drafted to the Newry branch of the institution, while Shaw, as we know, was in Mr. Townshend's land office in Dublin. During the period of their separation, between Shaw's fifteenth and twentieth years, they kept up a tremendous correspondence. In this way they probably worked off the literary energy which usually produces early works. The immense letters, sometimes illustrated with crude drawings and enlivened by brief dramas, which came and went with each post, served as "exhausts" for the superfluous steam of their literary force. It was understood between them that the letters were to be destroyed as soon as answered, as their authors did not relish the possibility of such unreserved soul histories falling into strange hands.

I believe that Shaw perpetrated one more long correspondence, this time with an unnamed English lady, whose fervently imaginative novels would have made her known, Shaw once asserted, had he been able to persuade her to make her name public, or at least to stick to the same pen name, instead of changing it for every book. Shaw also made one valuable acquaintance at this time through the accident of coming to lodge in the same house with him. This was Chichester Bell, of the family of that name distinguished for its inventive genius, a cousin of Graham Bell, the inventor of the telephone, and a nephew of Melville Bell, the inventor of the phonetic script known as Visible Speech. The author of the *Standard Elocutionist*, Chichester Bell's father, whom Shaw has described as by far the most majestic and imposing looking man that ever lived on this or any other planet, was the elocution professor in one of the schools attended by Shaw in his youth, the Wesleyan Connexional, now Wesley College, attendance at which, we may be sure from Shaw's case, by no means implied Methodism.* Although a qualified physician, Chichester Bell did not care for medical practice, and had gone to Germany, where he devoted himself to the study of chemistry and physics in the school of Helmholtz. Shaw's intercourse with Bell proved to be of great value to him. They studied Italian together, and while

* Cf. John Bull's *Other Island*; Preface for Politicians, p. xvii.

Shaw did not learn Italian with any final thoroughness, he learned a great deal else, chiefly about physics and pathology. It was through his association with Bell that he had come to read Tyndall and Tromsøen's "Clinical Lectures." But Bell is to be remembered chiefly in relation to Shaw, as first calling his serious attention to Wagner. When Shaw discovered that Bell, whose judgment he held in high regard, considered Wagner a great composer, he at once bought a vocal score of *Lohengrin*, which chanced to be the only sample to be had at the Dublin music shops. From this moment dates the career of the remarkable music critic, who, in after life, swept Max Nordau off the field with his brilliant and unanswerable defence of the master builder of modern music. For the first few bars of *Lohengrin* completely converted him. He immediately became, and ever afterwards remained, the "Perfect Wagnerite."

The days of Shaw's youth before he went to London, as we have seen, were poisoned because he was taught to bow down to proprietary respectability. But even in his "unfortunate childhood," as he calls it, his heart was so unregenerate that he secretly hated, and rebelled against, mere respectability. In after life, he found it impossible to express the relief with which he discovered that his heart was all along right, and that the current respectability of to-day is "nothing but a huge inversion of righteous and scientific social order weltering in dishonesty, uselessness, selfishness, wanton misery, and idiotic waste of magnificent opportunity for noble and happy living." Not the evangelist's but the true reformer's zeal was always Shaw's. He had too much insight not to recognize the futility of the effort to reform individuals; his humanitarian spirit was impersonal and found its freest manifestation in sublimation and revolt against social institutions. Concerning the unsocial system of setting class against class, and creed against creed, he has mordantly expressed himself:

"If I had not suffered from these things in my childhood, perhaps I could keep my temper about them. To an outsider there is nothing but comedy in the spectacle of a forlorn set of Protestant merchants in a Catholic country, led

by a miniature plutocracy of stockholders, doctors and land agents, and flavoured by that section of the landed gentry who are too heavily mortgaged to escape to London, playing at being a court and an aristocracy with the assistance of the unfortunate exile who has been persuaded to accept the post of lord lieutenant. To this pretence, involving a prodigious and continual lying, as to income and the social standing of relations, are sacrificed citizenship, self respect, freedom of thought, sincerity of character, and all the realities of life, its votaries gaining in return the hostile estrangement of the great mass of their fellow countrymen, and in their own class the supercilious snubs of those who have outdone them in pretension and the jealous envy of those whom they have outdone."

The power which he found in Ireland religious enough to redeem him from this abomination of desolation was, fitly enough, the power of art. "My mother, as it happened, had a considerable musical talent. In order to exercise it seriously she had to associate with other people who had musical talent. My first childish doubt as to whether God could really be a good Protestant was suggested by my observation of the deplorable fact that the best voices available for combination with my mother's in the works of the great composers had been unaccountably vouchsafed to Roman Catholics. Even the divine gentility was presently called in question, for some of these vocalists were undeniably connected with retail trade."

The situation in which Mrs. Shaw found herself offered no alternative. "There was no help for it; if my mother was to do anything but sing silly ballads in drawing-rooms she had to associate herself on an entirely republican footing with people of like artistic gifts, without the smallest reference to creed or class. Nay, if she wished to take part in the masses of Haydn and Mozart, which had not then been forgotten, she must actually permit herself to be approached by Roman Catholic priests and even, at their invitation, to enter that house of Belial, the Roman Catholic chapel (in Ireland the word church, as applied to a place of worship, denotes the Protestant denomination).

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and take part in their services. All of which led directly to the discovery, hard to credit at first, that a Roman Catholic priest could be as agreeable and cultivated a person as a Protestant clergyman was supposed, in defiance of latter experience, always to be, and, in short, that the notion that the courtly distinctions of Dublin society corresponded to any real human distinctions was as ignorant as it was pernicious. If religion is that which binds men to one another, and irreligion that which sundera, then must I testify that I found the religion of my country in its musical genius and its irreligion in its churches and drawing-rooms."

It was unerring common sense on the domestic plane, acquiescence in the sole solution of a flinty problem of life, which reveals Shaw's mother to us as the parent from whom he derived his determination, and his firm grip on practical affairs. In marked contradistinction to Lee, Mrs. Shaw made no concessions to fashion, firmly adhering to her master's old method in all its rigour. She behaved with complete independence of manner and speech in the mode of an Irish lady confronted with English people openly describing themselves as "middle class." On account of this characteristic independence her first experiences in London were unfortunate and disheartening. Not until she began to teach choirs in schools did she enter upon the road of complete success. The results she produced in these undertakings so pleased the inspectors and more particularly the parents at the prize distributions that the head mistresses were sensible enough to let her go her own way. Quite a conclusive proof of her ability is found in the fact that this remarkable woman, vigorous and young minded to-day although now in the seventies, worked at that famous modern institution, the North Collegiate School for Girls, until quite recently. For some years she sought to retire for the same reason that she stopped singing to her Irish sense of humour there was an element almost of the ridiculous in a first rate school having an old woman of between seventy and eighty wave a stick and conduct a choir. But D. Sophia Bryant, the prin-

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Shaw's early struggles in London. No rapt listening to the songs of rival nightingales, Keats and Shelley, as with Browning; no impetuous and clandestine marriage, as with Sheridan; no roses and raptures of *la vie Bohème*, as with Zola. It is, instead, for the most part a tale of consistent literary drudgery, rewarded by continual and repeated failures. The rare and individual style of the satirist, the deft fingering of the dramatist were wholly undeveloped, and even unsuspected, during this tentative period in his career. He turned his hand to various undertakings—to musical criticism, to versifying, to blank-versifying, to novel-writing; but all equally to no purpose. Asked once what was his first real success, he replied: "Never had any. Success in that sense is a thing that comes to you and takes your breath away. What came to me was invariably failure. By the time I wore it down I knew too much to care about either failure or success. Life is like a battle; you have to fire a thousand bullets to hit one man. I was too busy firing to bother about the scoring. As to whether I ever despaired, you will find somewhere in my works this line: 'He who has never hoped can never despair.' I am not a fluctuator." His self-sufficiency, even at this time, was proof against all discouragement. Perhaps he found consolation also in the saying: "He who is down need fear no fall."

Shaw never experienced any poverty of spirit, of determination, or of will; his poverty was pecuniary only. Until the time of his marriage he remained secure from the accusation of being the mould of fashion or the glass of form. While the Shaw of matrimonial respectability bears all the marks of his wife's civilizing influence in the matter of a *costume de rigueur*—fashionable clothes, patent-leather boots, and even, on rare occasions, a "stiff" collar—his dress in the late seventies and for twenty years thereafter was usually, like that of Marchbanks, strikingly anarchic. His outward appearance, as someone unkindly remarked, suggested that he might be a fairly respectable plasterer! "Now," said Shaw in 1896, "when people reproach me with the unfashionableness of my attire, they forget that to me it seems like the raiment of Solomon in all his glory

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I trimmed my cuffs to the quick with scissors, and wore a tall hat and *à la disant* black coat, green with decay." But the poverty of which this attire was the outward, visible sign was "shortness of cash," as numerous personal reminiscences show. From the depressing and devitalizing effects of "real poverty" he was strong enough to free himself, as the following autobiographical confidence clearly evidences:

"Whilst I am not sure that the want of money lames a poor man more than the possession of it lames a rich one, I am quite sure that the class which has the pretensions and prejudices and habits of the rich without its money, and the poverty of the poor without the freedom to avow poverty—in short, the people who don't go to the theatre because they cannot afford the stalls and are ashamed to be seen in the gallery—are the worst-off of all. To be on the down grade from the *haute bourgeoisie* and the landed gentry to the nadir at which the younger son's great-grandson gives up the struggle to keep up appearances; to have the pretence of a culture without the reality of it; to make three hundred pounds a year look like eight hundred pounds in Ireland or Scotland; or five hundred pounds look like one thousand pounds in London; to be educated neither at the Board School and the Hirkbeck nor at the University, but at some rotten private adventure academy for the sons of gentlemen; to try to maintain a select circle by excluding all the frankly poor people from it, and then find that all the rest of the world excludes you—that is poverty at its most damnable; and yet from that poverty a great deal of our literature and journalism has sprung. Think of the frightful humiliation of the boy Dickens in the blacking warehouse, and his undying resentment of his mother's wanting him to stay there—all on a false point of genteel honour. Think of Trollope, at an upper-class school with holes in his trousers, because his father could not bring himself to dispense with a man-servant. Ugh! He's trembling he's a millionaire—it matters

the rich; and that is the very devil. Fortunately, that sort of poverty can be cured by simply shaking off its ideas—cutting your coat according to your cloth, and not according to the cloth of your father's second cousin, the baronet. As I was always more or less in rebellion against those ideas, and finally shook them off pretty completely, I cannot say that I have much experience of real poverty—quite the contrary.” *

With that comic seriousness which always passes for outrageous prevarication, Shaw has related that during the nine years from 1876 to 1885 his adventures in literature netted him the princely sum of exactly six pounds. At first he “devilled” for a musical critic; but his notices “led to the stoppage of all the concert advertisements and ruined the paper”—“which died—partly of me.” He also began a Passion Play in blank verse, with the mother of the hero represented as a termagant. Ah, if that play had only been finished! But Shaw never carried through these customary follies of young authors, unless we agree with those who classify his novels as follies of a green boy. “I was always, fortunately for me,” Mr. Shaw once remarked, “a failure as a triffler. All my attempts at Art for Art’s sake broke down; it was like hammering tenpenny nails into sheets of notepaper.”

One finds it an easy matter to believe him when he tells us, not only that he was provincial, unrepresentable, but, more broadly speaking, that he was in an impossible position. “I was a foreigner—an Irishman, the most foreign of all foreigners when he has not gone through the University mill. I was . . . and uneducated; but, unfortunately, what I knew was exactly what the educated Englishman did not know, and what he knew I either didn’t know or didn’t believe.” Six pounds was a very small allowance for a growing young man, even a struggling author, to live on for nine years. Even if we match him with equal scepticism, at least we can discover, as will be seen, no

* *Who I Am, and What I Think*, by G. Bernard Shaw. Part I.—In the *Candid Friend*, May 11th, 1901.

error in his arithmetical calculations. After Shaw had hounded the musical critic and his paper to the grave, London absolutely refused to tolerate him on any terms. As the nine years progressed, he had one article accepted by Mr. G. R. Sims, who had just started a short-lived paper called *One and All*. "It brought me fifteen shillings. Full of hope and gratitude, I wrote a really brilliant contribution. 'That finished me.' During this period, he received his greatest fee—five pounds—for a patent medicine advertisement, a circumstance which may give some colour to Dr. Meyersfeld's early denunciation of Shaw as a "quacksalver." On another occasion, a publisher asked Shaw for some verses to fit some old blocks which he had bought up for a school prize book. "I wrote a parody of the thing he wanted and sent it as a joke. To my stupefaction he thanked me seriously, and paid me five shillings." Shaw was so much touched by the gift of five shillings for his parody that he wrote the generous publisher a serious verse for another picture. With the startling result that the publisher took it as a joke in questionable taste! Is it any wonder that Shaw's career as a versifier abruptly ended?

The analysis of the artistic temperament which Shaw puts in the mouth of John Tanner—an analysis which Mr. Robert Loraine finds to smack more of mania than of insincerity—is a cynical and distorted picture at best. And yet it gives us a refracted glimpse of the position which Shaw himself deliberately assumed. "The true artist," Tanner rattles on, "will let his wife starve, his children go barefoot, his mother drudge for his living at seventy, sooner than work at anything but his art. To women he is half vivisector, half vampire. He gets into intimate relations with them to study them, to strip the mask of convention from them, to surprise their inmost secrets, knowing that they have the power to rouse his deepest creative energies, to rescue him from his cold reason, to make him see visions and dream dreams, to inspire him, as he calls it. He persuades women that they may do this for their own purpose, whilst he really means them to do it for his." After various attempts "to earn an honest living," Shaw gave up trying to commit that sin against his nature, as he puts it.

His last attempt was in 1879, we are told, "when a company was formed in London to exploit an ingenious invention by Mr. Thomas Alva Edison—a much too ingenious invention, as it proved, being nothing less than a telephone of such stentorian efficiency that it bellowed your most private communications all over the house instead of whispering them with some sort of discretion." His interest in physics, his acquaintance with the works of Tyndall and Helmholtz, and his friendship with Mr. Chichester Bell, of which mention has been made, gave him, he asserts, the customary superiority over those about him which he is in the habit of claiming in all the relations of life. While he remained with the company only a few months, he discharged his duties in a manner, which, according to his own outrageous and comically prevaricative assertion, "laid the foundation of Mr. Edison's London reputation."

After this experience, he began, as he says, to lay the foundations of his own fortune "by the most ruthless disregard of all the quack duties which lead the peasant lad of fiction to the White House, and harness the real peasant boy to the plough until he is finally swept, as rubbish, into the workhouse." Far from being a "peasant lad," who climbed manfully upward from the lowest rung of the social ladder, he was in reality the son of a gentleman who had an income of at least three figures (four, if you count in dollars instead of pounds), and was second cousin to a baronet. "I never climbed any ladder: I have achieved eminence by sheer gravitation; and I hereby warn all peasant lads not to be duped by my pretended example into regarding their present servitude as a practicable first step to a celebrity so dazzling that its subject cannot even suppress his own bad novels."

Shaw seems intent upon convincing us that, like the artist of his own description, he was an atrocious egotist in his disregard of others; but we must take his confessions with the customary grain of salt. "I was an able-bodied and able-minded young man in the strength of my youth; and my family, then heavily embarrassed, needed my help urgently. That I should have chosen to be a burden to them instead was, according to all the conventions of peasant fiction, monstrous. Well, without a blush

I embraced the monstrosity. I did not throw myself into the struggle for life. I threw my mother into it. I was not a staff to my father's old age; I hung on to his coat tails. His reward was to live just long enough to read a review of one of these silly novels written in an obscure journal by a personal friend of my own (now eminent in literature as Mr. John Mackinnon Robertson) prefiguring me to some extent as a considerable author. I think, myself, that this was a handsome reward, far better worth having than a nice pension from a dutiful son struggling slavishly for his parents' bread in some sordid trade. Handsome or not, it was the only return he ever had for the little pension he contrived to export from Ireland for his family. My mother reinforced it by drudging in her elder years at the art of music which she had followed in her prime freely for love. I only helped to spend it. People wondered at my heartlessness; one young and romantic lady had the courage to remonstrate openly and indignantly with me, 'for the which,' as Pepys said of the shipwright's wife who refused his advances, 'I did respect her.' Callous as *Connie* to moral babbles, I steadily wrote my five pages a day and made a man of myself (at my mother's expense) instead of a slave."

In Shaw's opinion, his brain constituted the sum and substance of his riches. The projection and exposition of his experience came to be the most urgent need and object of his life. He recognized a higher duty than merely earning his living: the fulfilment of his individual destiny. He resolved to become a writer. In this resolve to dedicate all his powers to the art of self-expression, lies the explanation of his strange words: "My mother worked for my living instead of preaching that it was my duty to work for hers; therefore, take off your hat to her and blush." *

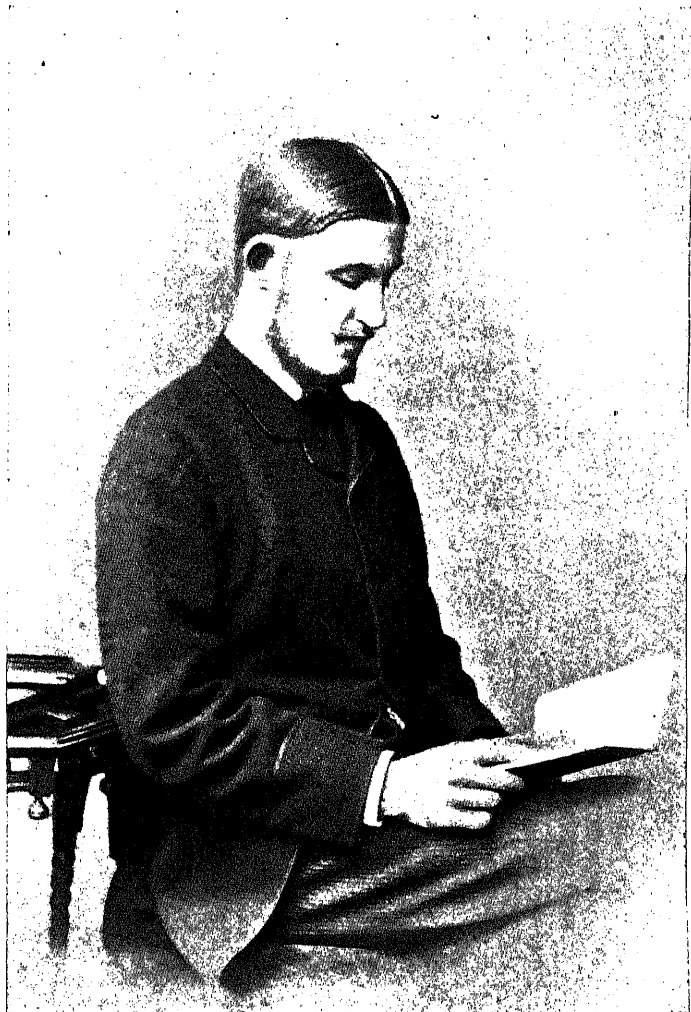
Although it was a "frightful squeeze" at times, Shaw was not wholly destitute. A suit of evening clothes and the knack of playing a "simple accompaniment at sight more congenially to a singer than most amateurs," gave him "for a fitful year

* *The Irrational Knot*, Preface to the American edition of 1905, Brentanos, N. Y.

or so," the *entrée* into the better circle of musical society in London.

In this latter day of his assertion that money controls morality, Shaw is perfectly consistent in speaking of his poverty and quotidian shabbiness as the two "disgusting faults" of his youth. But at the time he did not recognize them as faults because he could not help them. "I therefore tolerated the gross error that poverty, though an inconvenience and a trial is not a sin and a disgrace: and I stood for my self-respect on the things I had: probity, ability, knowledge of art, laboriousness, and whatever else came cheaply to me." A certain pride of birth, a consciousness of worthy ancestry, also sustained him and helped him to triumph over circumstance. It was this same feeling which gave him suavity and poise during the later campaigns of his revolutionary Socialism, and saved him from the excesses, the blind fury, of the mere proletarian. He had a magnificent library in Bloomsbury, a priceless picture-gallery in Trafalgar Square, and another at Hampton Court, without any servants to look after or rent to pay. During these years Shaw's gain in the cultivation of his musical and artistic tastes more than compensated for his lack of the advantages of wealth. Nor were his essays in literature and criticism—I do not refer to his playful dilettantism—profitless in any real sense. It is true that innumerable articles were consistently returned to him; and yet he went his way undismayed, slowly saturating himself with Italian art from Mantegna to Michael Angelo, with the best music from London to Bayreuth. And while London had not "caught his tone," musical or otherwise, at this time, the day was to come in which he should reap the reward for his critical knowledge of art and music, for the rare and individual style which he was slowly perfecting.

To the student of Shaw as the *littérateur*—the highwayman who "held up" so many different forms of art—the chief interest of this period is to be found in the five novels which he wrote during the five years from 1879 to 1883—an average of one a year. His first novel, written in 1879, and called, "with merciless fitness" as Shaw says, *Immaturity*, was never published; and we are told that even the rats were unable to finish



From a photo by]

[Window & Grove.

SHAW AT THE AGE OF TWENTY-THREE

From a photograph taken in London, July 4th, 1879

it. George Meredith, the novelist, who was a reader and literary adviser for the publishing firm of Chapman and Hall, London, from 1860 to 1897, rejected the manuscript of *Immaturity, sans phrase*—quickly disposing of it with a laconic “No.” The remaining four have all been published, in magazines and in book-form, either in England or America. Shaw “turned them out,” one each year, with unvarying regularity and also with unvarying result: refusal by the publishers. That six pounds which Shaw earned in nine years must certainly have gone a long way—as postage stamps.

Mr. Shaw has carefully explained to us why his works were refused by publisher after publisher. And I find no reason to question his explanation to the effect that it was the world-old struggle between literary conscience and public taste. The more he progressed towards his own individual style, and ventured upon the freer expression of his own ideas, the more he disappointed the “grave, elderly lovers of literature.” As to the regular novel-publishing houses, whose readers were merely on the scent of popularity, they gave him, we are told, no quarter at all. “And so between the old stool of my literary conscientiousness and the new stool of a view of life that did not reach publishing point in England until about ten years later, when Ibsen drove it in, my novels fell to the ground.”

We may omit for the present any discussion of the validity of Mr. Shaw's claims as a “fictionist.” But the story of the circumstances under which the novels finally found their way into print is certainly worthy of narration. It was in 1882 that Henry George, by a speech during one of the public meetings at the Memorial Hall, Farringdon Street, London, fired Shaw to enlist, in Heine's phrase, “as a soldier in the Liberative War of Humanity.”* About this time a body, styling itself the Land Reform Union, which still survives as the English Land Restoration League, was formed to propagate Georgite Land Nationalization. The official mouthpiece of this body was called, if memory serves, the *Christian Socialist*, which did not last long, owing, as Shaw said, to a lack of Christians. Shaw made

* Cf. Chapter IV., *The Fabian Society*.

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a number of lifelong friends through his connection with this organization, which he joined soon after its formation. Chief among these may be mentioned James Leigh Joynes, Sydney Olivier and Henry Hyde Champion; other acquaintances were two Christian Socialist clergymen—Stewart Headlam and Symes of Nottingham. Shaw and Symes frequently indulged in wordy warfare over the respective merits of Socialism and Land Nationalization as universal panaceas for social evils. Symes argued that Land Nationalization would settle everything, to which Shaw cleverly and characteristically replied, as he once told me, that if capital were still privately appropriated Symes would remain "the chaplain of a pirate ship." It is proof of Shaw's fundamental Socialism that he still regards this as a very fair description of the position of a clergyman under our present system.

Through his association with James Leigh Joynes and the Salt family it is not difficult to trace Shaw's initial feeling for Shelley, and the origin and growth of his humanitarian and vegetarian principles. At this time Joynes had just been deprived of his Eton post because he had made a tour in Ireland with Henry George and been arrested with him under the Coercion Act by the police, who did not understand Land Nationalization and supposed the two to be emissaries of the Clan na Gael. Henry Salt, another Eton master, to whom Joynes' sister was married, was not only, like Joynes, a vegetarian, a humanitarian, a Shelleyan, but a De Quinceyite as well. Being a born revolutionist, he loathed Eton; and as soon as he had saved enough to live with a Thoreau-like simplicity in a labourer's cottage in the country, he threw up his post and shook the dust of Eton from his feet. In company with Joynes, Shaw visited the Salts once before they left Eton. It is interesting in this connection to read an absurdly amusing description, written by Shaw, of his first visit to them in the country at Tilford—an article entitled *A Sunday on the Surrey Hills*.*

There were no children in the family; and one of Shaw's chief amusements while visiting the Salts was to play endless piano-

* *The Pall Mall Gazette*, April 28th, 1888.

forte duets with Mrs. Salt, on what he called "the noisiest grand piano that ever descended from Eton to a Surrey cottage." Salt found his *métier*, not in Socialism, but in humanitarianism. He founded the Humanitarian League, of which he is still secretary. This association of Shaw with the Salt family eventuated in close and warm mutual friendship. Many were the visits Shaw paid them at this time and in later years. It was in the heather on Limpsfield Common, during his visits to them at Oxford, that he wrote several of the scenes of his *Plays, Pleasant and Unpleasant*.

In this association may be discovered the real link between Shaw and the Humanitarians. For twenty-five years Shaw was a "cannibal," according to his own damning verdict. For the remainder of his life he has been a strict vegetarian, professing his principles with a comic force equalled only by the rigour with which he puts them into practice. While the most of men in their boyhood have walked about with a cheap edition of Shelley in their pockets, it is a tiresome trait in Shaw, someone has slightly remarked, that he has never taken this cheap edition out. Shelley it was, certainly, who first called Shaw's attention to the "infamy of his habits." And it is also true that Shaw has never discarded his vegetarian principles, never repudiated Shelley's humane views and ideals of life. "It may require some reflection," Shaw once wrote, "to see that high feeling brings high thinking; but we already know, without reflection, that high thinking brings what is called plain living. In this century the world has produced two men—Shelley and Wagner—in whom intense poetic feeling was the permanent state of their consciousness, and who were certainly not restrained by any religious, conventional or prudential considerations from indulging themselves to the utmost of their opportunities. Far from being gluttonous, drunken, cruel or debauched, they were apostles of vegetarianism and water-drinking; had an utter horror of violence and 'sport'; were notable champions of the independence of women; and were, in short, driven into open revolution against the social evils which the average sensual man finds extremely suitable to him. So much is this the case that the practical doctrine of these two

arch-voluptuaries always presents itself to ordinary persons a saint-like asceticism." *

At the time of the mutual intimacy of Joynes, Shaw, and the Salts, and their unhesitating approval and admiration. Shelley, early in the eighties, vegetarian restaurants began to be established here and there throughout the country. These catered restaurants, Mr. Shaw once remarked in connection with his own conversion to the faith of Shelley, "made vegetarianism possible for a man too poor to be catered for." † It is hardly open to doubt that, while Shelley first called Shaw's attention to vegetarianism, it was Joynes and Salt who first confirmed him in the belief, which soon became solidified in a hard-and-fast principle, that "the enormity of eating and scorched corpses of animals—cannibalism with its heroic disomitted—becomes impossible the moment it becomes conscious instead of thoughtlessly habitual."

Another member of this coterie, in which there was no quotation of Henry George and Karl Marx, but a great deal of Walt Whitman and Thoreau, was the now well-known Social and author, Edward Carpenter, whose *Towards Democracy* and other works are a faithful reflex of the man. It became the habit of these early apostles of "the simple life" to wear sandals; Carpenter even wore his out of doors. He had taught the secret of their manufacture to a workman friend of his, Millthorpe, a village near Sheffield, where he resided. Unfittingly, the habitual wearer of moccasins, Carpenter, was always called The Noble Savage by the members of this congenial and delightful circle. The noisy grand piano grand noisier than ever when Shaw and Carpenter visited the Salts. Carpenter, like Shaw, revelling in pianoforte duets with M. Salt.

The death of Joynes was a great grief to these close friends.

* *The Religion of the Pianoforte*. In the *Fortnightly Review*, February 1894.

† Mr. Shaw's confessions in regard to his change from "cannibalism" to vegetarianism are perhaps best given in an article in the *Pall Mall Gazette* for January 26th, 1888, entitled, *Failures of Inept Vegetarianism By an Expert*.

especially to Shaw. I am convinced that those mordantly incisive and penetrating attacks which Shaw, in after life, made upon modern surgery and modern medicine find their animus in his resentment of the manner of Joynes' death. Certain passages from *The Philanderer* and *The Conflict of Science and Common Sense* thus become more humanly comprehensible. The literary activities of this circle, so sadly broken up by the death of Joynes, were by no means confined solely to Carpenter and Shaw. Joynes himself left a volume of excellent translations of the revolutionary songs of the German revolutionists of 1848—Herwegh, Freiligrath and others.* Salt, whom Shaw has occasionally quoted, has published several monographs, his tastes and predilections revealing themselves in the names of Shelley, James Thomson, Jeffries and De Quincey.

The Socialist revival of the eighties is responsible for the final publication of Shaw's novels. As long as he kept sending them to the publishers, "they were as safe from publicity as they would have been in the fire." But as soon as he flung them aside as failures, with a strange perversity, "they almost instantly began to show signs of life." Among the crop of propagandist magazines which accompanied the Socialistic revival of the eighties was one called *To-Day*—not the present paper of that name, but one of the many "To-Days which are now Yesterdays." It was printed by Henry Hyde Champion, but there were several joint editors, of brief tenure, among whom were Belfort Bax, the well-known Socialist, and James Leigh Joynes. Although publishing his novels in this magazine, which it seems paid nothing for contributions, "seemed a matter of no more consequence than stuffing so many window-panes with them," Shaw nevertheless offered up *An Unsocial Socialist* and *Cashed Byron's Profession* on this unstable altar of his political faith.†

* For a brief and illuminative biographical sketch of James Leigh Joynes, compare Shaw's review of his book, *Songs of a Revolutionary Epoch*, in the *Pall Mall Gazette*, April 16th, 1888.

† The first instalment of *An Unsocial Socialist* appeared in *To-Day*, a "monthly magazine of Scientific Socialism," New Series, Vol. I. (January-June, 1884), March number, pp. 205-220. The final instalment appeared in New Series, Vol. II., of the same magazine (July-December, 1884), December number, pp. 543-579. The novel appeared under Shaw's name,

With one noteworthy exception, there were no visible results from the serial publications of these two novels. Shaw's novels, not uncharacteristically, appeared in inverse order of composition; and number five, *An Unsocial Socialist*, made Shaw acquainted with William Morris, an acquaintance which, as we shall see, ripened later into genuine and sincere friendship. To Shaw's surprise, as he tells us, William Morris had been reading the monthly instalments with a certain relish—a proof to Shaw's mind "how much easier it is to please a great man than a little one, especially when you share his politics."

Another propagandist magazine, created after the passing of *To-day*, and called *Our Corner*, was published by Mrs. Annie Besant, with whom Shaw had become acquainted about the time he joined the Fabian Society. "She was an incorrigible benefactress," Shaw says, "and probably revenged herself for my freely expressed scorn for this weakness by drawing on her private account to pay me for my jejune novels." Up to this time, all Shaw's literary productions seemed to have the deadly effect of driving their media of circulation to an early grave. After *The Irrational Knot* and *Love Among the Artists* had run through its pages in serial form, *Our Corner* likewise succumbed to the inevitable.*

To Shaw's expressed regret, *Cashel Byron's Profession* found one staunch admirer at least. This was Henry Hyde Champion, who had thrown up a commission in the Army at the call of Socialism. This admiration for Shaw's realistic exposure of pugilism—Mr. Shaw once told me that he always considered admiration of *Cashel Byron's Profession* the mark of a fool!

and is marked at the close (page 379), "The End," and dated beneath, "London, 1883," the date of composition. *Cashel Byron's Profession* ran in the same magazine through the years 1885 and 1886, beginning in *New Series*, Vol. III. (January-June, 1885), April number, pp. 143-160, and concluding in Vol. V. (January-June, 1886), March number, pp. 67-73.

* *The Irrational Knot* began in Vol. V. (January-June, 1885), pp. 229-240, ran through Vols. VI., VII. and VIII., and was concluded in Vol. IX. (January-June, 1887), ending on page 82. *Love Among the Artists* opened in Vol. X. (July-December, 1887) of the same magazine, ran through Vol. XI., and was concluded in Vol. XII. (July-December, 1888), on page 352. It is marked at the close (page 352), "The End, London, 1891"—the date of composition.

— had very momentous consequences. Champion, it seems, had an “unregenerate taste for pugilism” — a pugnacious survival of his abdicated adjutancy. “He liked ‘Cashel Byron’ so much that he stereotyped the pages of *To-Day* which it occupied, and in spite of my remonstrances, hurled on the market a misshapen shilling edition. My friend, Mr. William Archer, reviewed it prominently; the *Saturday Review*, always susceptible in those days to the arts of self defence, unexpectedly declared it the novel of the age; Mr. W. E. Henley wanted to have it dramatized; Stevenson wrote a letter about it . . . ; the other papers hastily searched their waste paper baskets for it and reviewed it, mostly rather disappointedly; the public preserved its composure and did not seem to care.” This letter of Stevenson’s to William Archer,* written at Saranac Lake in the winter of 1887-8, contains some very interesting criticism, as a quotation will show:

“What am I to say? I have read your friend’s book with singular relish. If he has written any other, I beg you will let me see it; and if he has not, I beg him to lose no time in supplying the deficiency. It is full of promise, but I should like to know his age. There are things in it that are very clever, to which I attach no importance; it is the shape of the age. And there are passages, particularly the rally in the presence of the Zulu King, that show genuine and remarkable narrative talent — a talent that few will have the wit to understand, a talent of strength, spirit, capacity, sufficient vision, and sufficient self-sacrifice, which last is the chief point in a narrative.”

And at the end of his next letter to Mr. Archer (February, 1888), he says “Tell Shaw to hurry up. I want another.”

Neither Shaw nor Champion earned anything from that first shilling edition, “which began with a thousand copies, but proved immortal.” Shortly after this first edition was exhausted, the publishing house of Walter Scott and Company

* Published, in part, in *The Letters of Robert Louis Stevenson*, Vol. II., edited by Sidney Colvin.

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placed a revised shilling edition on the market; and the book was also published in New York at about the same time (Harper and Brothers, New York, 1887). Brentanos, New York, brought out an edition in 1897, and this was followed in 1899 by an edition of *An Unsocial Socialist*.*

The immediate cause of these editions was the temporary interest in the works of Mr. Shaw, occasioned by Mr. Richard Mansfield's notable productions of *Arms and the Man* and *The Devil's Disciple*. The publication of *Plays, Pleasant and Unpleasant*, in two volumes, by H. S. Stone and Company, of Chicago, followed shortly afterwards. In 1904, when Mr. Daly's production of *Candida* created such a stir in America, Mr. Volney Streamer, of the firm of Brentanos, a Shaw enthusiast of many years' standing, used his influence to have these two books reprinted. None of Shaw's novels are copyright in America, so that he has never, it appears, reaped the reward of the moderate, although intermittent, vogue which his novels have enjoyed in that country. It is a fact of common knowledge that Shaw prefers to be judged by his later work; but the demand in America for these novels has been so large that they are likely to be published for years yet to come. In 1889 or 1890, it must have been, Shaw happened to notice that his novels were "raging in America," and that the list of book sales in one of the United States was headed by a novel entitled *An Unsocial Socialist*. In the preface to the "Authorized Edition" of *Cashel Byron's Profession*, which contains the history of the life and death of the novels, Mr. Shaw says, "As it was clearly unfair that my own American publishers (H. S. Stone and Company) should be debarred by delicacy towards me from exploiting the new field of derelict fiction, I begged them to make the most of their inheritance; and with my full approval Opus 3, called 'Love Among the Artists' (a paraphrase of the forgotten line 'Love Among the Roses') followed."†

* The *New York Herald* contained the statement that "Brentanos have done a service to literature in reprinting two of Shaw's novels that are

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This third act of Shaw's "tragedy," as he calls it, is by no means the end of the play; as with Thomas Hardy's endless dramas, the curtain may never be rung down. One might imagine that Shaw, the Socialist, required the patience of a Job and the self-repression of a stoic to enable him to restrain his anger over the diversion of the rewards of his talent from his own to the pockets of Capitalist publishers, free of all obligation to the author. But he accepts his fate with breezy philosophy.

"I may say," he wrote to Harper and Brothers (who had published his *Cashel Byron's Profession*) in November, 1899, "that I entirely disagree with the ideas of twenty years ago as to the 'piratical' nature of American republications of non-copyright books. Unlike most authors, I am enough of an economist to know that unless an American publisher acquires copyright he can no more make a profit at my expense than he can at Shakspeare's by republishing *Hamlet*. The English nation, when taxed for the support of the author by a price which includes author's royalties, whilst the American nation escapes that burden, may have a grievance against the American nation, but that is a very different thing from a grievance of the author against the American publisher." *

"Suffice it to say here that there can be no doubt now that the novels so long left for dead in the forlorn-hope magazines of the eighties have arisen and begun to propagate themselves

Co.), which contains the above-quoted remark. In the autumn of 1901, Grant Richards, at the time the English publisher of almost all of Mr. Shaw's works, also brought out a revised edition of *Cashel Byron's Profession*. In the autumn of 1904 *The Irrational Knot* was for the first time published in book form by Archibald Constable and Co., Mr. Shaw's English publishers at present. In 1905 *The Irrational Knot* was published in America by Brentanos.

* On publishing his *Cashel Byron's Profession*, Harper and Brothers sent Mr. Shaw ten pounds in recognition of his moral right as an author to share any profits the book might yield. There were then no international copyright laws in force, and the works of foreign authors were not protected in America. When Mr. Shaw learned that this same book had been republished by another American house, he sent back to Harper and Brothers the ten pounds, with thanks for its use, explaining that since the book had been republished by another firm, even his moral claim to recognition by the original American publishers had lapsed.

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vigorously throughout the New World at the rate of a dollar and a half per copy, free of all royalty to the flattered author." He begs for absolution from blame "if these exercises of a raw apprentice break loose again and insist on their right to live. The world never did know chalk from cheese in the matter of art; and, after all, since it is only the young and old who have time to read—the rest being too busy living—my exercises may be fitter for the market than my masterpieces."

In 1888, when the last of the novels of his nouage was completed, Shaw was still striking in the dark. He had not yet found the opening into the light, the portal giving out from the stuffy world of imaginative lying into the great world of real life—a life of pleasurable activity, strenuous endeavour, and high achievement. He found his way out by following an insistent summons—the clarion call of Henry George. And when, having doffed the swaddling clothes of romance, he emerged from the dim retreat of his imagination, it was to find himself standing in the dazzling light of a new day—the day of Socialism, of the Fabian Society, and—of George Bernard Shaw.

THE NOVELIST

"London was not ripe for me. Nor was I ripe for London. I was in an impossible position. I was a foreigner - an Irishman, the most foreign of all foreigners when he has not gone through the University mill. I was . . . not uneducated; but, unfortunately, what I knew was exactly what the educated Englishman didn't know or didn't believe."—*George Bernard Shaw: an Interview*. In *The Chap-Book*, November, 1998.

CHAPTER III

AS a young man of twenty-four, Bernard Shaw began to evolve a moral code. He perceived in those phases of contemporary existence which either intimately touched his life or daily challenged his critical scrutiny, a shocking discrepancy between things as they are and things as they should be. He has never been a "whole hogger," like Pope or Omar Khayyam: he neither believed that whatever is is right nor wished to shatter this sorry scheme of things *entire*. The arch-foe of idealism, he paradoxically prefaced his attack by hoisting the banner of an ideal. Shaw has spent more than a quarter of a century in formulating his ideal, in attempting to concretize his individual code into a universal ethical system.

Let us not fall into the crass error of supposing that Shaw has never come under the spell of the fascination of idealism and romance. Shaw the realist paid his toll to Romance before the moral passion ever dawned upon his soul. Just as Zola always bore the brand of Hugo, just as Ibsen worked his way through romance to real life, so Shaw found his feet in realism only after tripping several times over the novels of a romantic imagination. Shaw's novels are the products of a riotous and fanciful imagination, if not, as he dubs them, the compounds of ignorance and intuition. In a celebrated discussion with Mr. W. H. Mallock, we have Shaw's frank confession:

"We are both novelists, privileged as such to make fancy pictures of Society and individuals, and to circulate them as narratives of things that have actually been; and the critics will gravely find fault with our fictitious law, or our fictitious history, or our fictitious psychology, if we depart therein from perfect verisimilitude. Why have we this extraordinary privilege? Because, I submit, we are both natural-born tellers of the thing that is not. Not, observe,

vulgar impostors who lie for motives of gain, to extort alms, to conceal or excuse discreditable facts in our history, to glorify ourselves, to facilitate the sale of a horse, or to avoid unpleasantness. All humanity lies like that, more or less. But Mr. Mallock and I belong to those who lie for the sheer love of lying, who forsake everything else for it, who put into it laborious extra touches of art for which there is no extra pay, whose whole life, if it were looked into closely enough, would be found to have been spent more in the world of fiction than of reality." *

Shaw has somewhere placed on record his boast that such insight as he had in criticism was due to the fact that he exhausted romanticism before he was ten years old. "Your popular novelists," he contemptuously declared, "are now gravely writing the stories I told to myself before I replaced my first set of teeth. Some day I will try to found a genuine psychology of fiction by writing down the history of my imagined life, duels, battles, love-affairs with queens and all. They say that man in embryo is successively a fish, a bird, a mammal, and so on, before he develops into a man. Well, popular novel-writing is the fish stage of your Jonathan Swift. I have never been so dishonest as to sneer at our popular novelists. I once went on like that myself. Why does the imaginative man always end by writing comedy if only he has also a sense of reality? Clearly because of the stupendous irony of the contrast between his imaginary adventures and his real circumstances and powers. At night, a conquering hero, an Admirable Crichton, a Don Juan; by day, a cowardly little brat cuffed by his nurse for stealing lumps of sugar. . . . My real name," he added, "is Alnaschar." †

As a matter of fact, Shaw has anticipated his exhaustion of romanticism by some seventeen years. It was not until he finished the novels of his nonage that he could justly boast of

* *On Mr. Mallock's Proposed Trumpet Performance.* In the *Fortnightly Review*, April, 1894.

† *Who I Am, and What I Think.* Part I. In the *Candid Friend*, May 11th, 1901.

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having "worked off" that romanticism which always appears to be latent in every creative imagination in the stage of incipency. Remember what Stevenson wrote to William Archer of *Cashel Byron's Profession*:

"As a whole, it is (of course) a fever dream of the most feverish. . . . It is all mad, mad and deliriously delightful; the author has a taste in chivalry like Walter Scott's or Dumas's, and then he daubs in little bits of Socialism; he soars away on the wings of the romantic griffon—even the griffon, as he cleaves air, shouting with laughter at the nature of the quest—and I believe in his heart he thinks he is labouring in a quarry of solid granite realism.

"It is this that makes me—the most hardened adviser now extant—stand back and hold my peace. If Mr. Shaw is below five-and-twenty, let him go his path; if he is thirty, he had best be told that he is a romantic, and pursue romance with his eyes open; perhaps he knows it; God knows!—my brain is softened." *

It is all very well for Shaw to say that he used Bizet's *Carmen* as a safety valve for his romantic impulses. But the testimony of his own novels flatly contradicts his complacent assertion that he was romantic enough to have come to the end of romance before he began to create in art for himself.

These novels, in spite of their youthful romanticism, nevertheless constitute the record of the adventures of an earnest and anarchic young man, with a knack of keen observation and terse portraiture, striving to give voice to and interpret the spirit of the century. When someone, in 1892, suggested that Shaw was, of course, a follower of Ibsen, Shaw replied with a great show of indignation: "What! I a follower of Ibsen! My good sir, as far as England is concerned, Ibsen is a follower of mine. In 1880, when I was only twenty-four, I wrote a book called 'The Irrational Knot,' which reads nowadays like an

* *The Letters of R. L. Stevenson*, Vol. II. Edited by Sidney Colvin,

Ibsenite novel." And in the postscript to the preface to the new edition of that novel, after having declared with familiar Shavian wiliness in the preface that he "couldn't stand" his own book, he makes a sudden *bouleversement* as follows: "Since writing the above I have looked through the proof sheets of this book, and found, with some access of respect for my youth, that it is a fiction of the first order. . . . It is one of those fictions in which the morality is original and not ready made. . . . I seriously suggest that 'The Irrational Knot' may be regarded as an early attempt on the part of the life force to write 'A Doll's House' in English by the instrumentality of a very immature writer aged twenty-four. And though I say it that should not, the choice was not such a bad shot for a stupid instinctive force that has to work and become conscious of itself by means of human brains."

With all its immaturity, *The Irrational Knot* is undoubtedly in the "tone of our time." It is the ill-chosen title, however, rather than the contents which recalls Nora and Torvald. The institution of marriage is not shown to be irrational; Shaw's shafts were aimed at the code of social morality which renders marriages such as the one described inevitable failures. Shaw not only seeks to expose the fatal inconsistencies of this social code, but also damns the feeble shams with which Society attempts to bolster up those inconsistencies.

Endowed with much of the bluntness of Bluntschli, but with an added sensitiveness, the "hero" of this novel may be described as the crude and repellent prototype of the later Shavian males. Believing more in force than in *savoir faire*, in brutal sincerity than in conventional graces, Conolly stands out for literal truth and violent tactlessness as against social propriety and observance of *les convenances*. He is acting with perfect validity to himself when he says, in answer to the question as to what he is going to do about his wife's elopement with a former lover: "Eat my supper. I am as hungry as a bear." After Marian's desertion by her lover, Conolly urges her to return to him, assuring her that now she is just the wife he wants, since she is at last rid of "fashionable society, of her family, her position, her principles, and all the rest of her chains

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for ever." Marian refuses, because she cannot "respect herself for breaking loose from what is called her duty." Their definitive words epitomize the failure of their life together.

"'You are too wise, Ned,' she said, suffering him to replace her gently in the chair.

"'It is impossible to be too wise, dearest,' he said, and unhesitatingly turned and left her."

The subjects which inspired Shaw's maturer genius are the same subjects which so actively, if crudely and imperfectly, struggle for expression in this early work. Much acuteness is exhibited by the young man of twenty-four in spying out the weak points in the armour of "that corporate knave, Society." When the "high-bred" wife of the "self-made" man elopes with a "gentleman," Society's dismay is only feigned. Like Roebuck Ramsden, Marian's relatives are quite willing to forgive, and even to thank, the cur if he will only marry her: by ousting a rank outsider like Conolly, Douglas appears to Society almost in the light of a champion of its cause. Shaw was too close an observer of life, even at twenty-four, to attempt to make out a case against matrimony by celebrating the success of an unblest union. His point is turned against Society, less for upholding traditional morality than for making the preservation of its class distinctions its highest law. Society is ready enough to forgive Douglas; but Marmaduke Lind, in setting up an unblest union with Conolly's sister, Mademoiselle Lalage Virtue, of the Bijou Theatre, places himself beyond the pale. For she is socially "impossible"; and, consequently, there can be no relenting towards Marmaduke until he return, and, in the odour of sanctity and respectability, marry Lady Constance Carberry!

The Irrational Knot cannot be called novel on account of its rather commonplace thought that "a girl who lives in Belgravian ought not to marry with a man who is familiar with the Mile End Road." But as Mr. W. L. Courtney suggestively remarks: "What is novel is the illustration, in clever and mordant fashion, of the absurd folly and wastefulness of social conditions which obstinately make intelligence subservient to aristocratic prestige. Even in our much-abused country there

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"Henceforth Uncle Reginald is welcome to my heartiest detestation. I have been waiting ever since I knew him for an excuse to hate him; and now he has given me one. He has taken part--like a true parent--against you with a self-intoxicated young fool whom he ought to have put out of the house. He has told me to mind my own business. I shall be even with him for that some day. I am as vindictive as an elephant; I hate people who are not vindictive; they are never grateful either, only incapable of any enduring sentiment. . . . I am thoroughly well satisfied with myself altogether; at last I have come out of a scene without having forgotten the right thing to say!"

Imagination lingers fondly, as Mr. Hubert Bland once remarked, over the spectacle of Elsinor standing in the middle of the stage, three-quarters face to the audience, and firing off those acute generalizations about people who are not vindictive. Shaw's cleverness has begun thus early to betray him; a number of the characters are smart, but quite unnatural. The "Literary Great-grandfather" of the present Shaw unerringly pointed out many of the weak spots of Society; but his fundamental Socialism, impatient of class distinctions and social barriers, leads him occasionally into crude caricature. The book's greatest fault lies, perhaps, in the fact that his characters employ, not the natural, ductile speech of to-day, but the stilted diction of Dumas and Scott.

Commonplace as is the characterization, Shaw's next novel, *Love Among the Artists*, is a tract--less a novel than a critical essay with a purpose, in narrative form. Shaw confesses that he wrote this book for the purpose of illustrating "the difference between that enthusiasm for the fine arts which people gather from reading about them, and the genuine artistic faculty which cannot help creating, interpreting, or, at least, unaffectedly enjoying music and pictures."

I have often wondered if it might not be possible for one who did not know Shaw personally to construct a quite credible biography by making a composite of the peculiarly Shavian types presented in his novels and plays. Without carrying the

analogy to extremes, I think it mediately true that Shaw has one by one exhibited, in semi-autobiographic form, the distinguishing hall-marks of his individual and many-sided character. To what extent Owen Jack is a projection of the Shaw of this period, how graphically, if unconsciously, Shaw has revealed in this droll original his own ideals of music and his defence of a certain impudently exasperating assertiveness of manner in himself, is difficult to decide. Shaw insists that Jack is partly founded on Beethoven. And yet there is an undoubted resemblance between the real Irishman and the imagined Welshman who plays the Hyde of Jack to the Jekyll of Shaw. Take "C. di B." and G. B. S., Jack is the first of the "privileged lunatics." He scorns the pedantry of the schools, sneers at mechanical music of academic origin, jibes at "analytic criticism," and fiercely denounces the antiquated views of the musical organizations of England, with their old fogeyism, their cowardice in the face of novelty, their dread of innovation, and their cringing subservience to obsolescent and outworn models. Like Shaw, Jack is always tolerant of sincerity, always sympathetic with true effort, unrestrainedly enthusiastic over any vital outpouring of the creative spirit; rebuking tyranny wherever he sees it, exposing falsehood whenever he hears it, eternally vigilant in exposing frauds and unmasking shams. And yet, with all his offensive brusqueness, fiercer intolerance, and colossal self-sufficiency, gentle-hearted, compassionate, and, in the presence of beauty, deeply humble.

Shaw once called *Love Among the Artists* a novel with a purpose. Viewed from another standpoint, it is a collection of types, a study in temperaments. The author preaches the arrogance of genius as opposed to a false humility in the presence of great art works. The shallow artist, Adrian Herbert, "spends whole days in explaining to you what a man of genius is and feels, knowing neither the one nor the other"; Mary Sutherland never surpasses mediocrity as an artist because her knowledge is based upon hearsay instead of upon experience. She stands in sharp contrast to Madge Brailsford, who tersely puts her case to Mary—the case, one might say, of the whole book—"If you don't like your own pictures, depend upon it no one else will."

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I am going to be an actress because I think I can act. You are going to be a painter because you think you can't paint." Mr. Huncker declares that Mary Sutherland, "lymphatically selfish and utterly unsympathetic," is his prime favourite in the story. "Her taste in flaring colours, her feet, her habit of breathing heavily when aroused emotionally, her cowardices, her artistic failures, her eye-glasses, her treacly sentiment—what a study of the tribe artistic! And truly British withal." The only other noteworthy figure in the book is the evasive, elusive Mademoiselle Szezymblica—a study searching in the closeness and delicacy of its observation. This charming and piquant Polish pianist, although emanating poetry and romance, has, as she puts it, the "soul commercial" within her. She cannot see why, even if she does love her husband, she should therefore dispense with her piano practice!

Unlike the classic model for a play, this novel has neither beginning, middle, nor ending; and yet it has many brilliantly executed scenes. Who could ever forget the street fight in Paris, the humorous "love-scene" between Madge Brailsford and Owen Jack, and the rehearsal, so acute in its satire—fitting companion-piece to the Wagner lecture in *Cashel Byron's Profession*?

It is noteworthy that *Love Among the Artists* heralds a favourite thesis of Shaw's—the natural antipathy between blood relations—a thesis expounded many years later by John Tanner in the rather leaden epigram "I suspect that the tables of consanguinity have a natural basis in a natural repugnance." Cashel Byron is always catching himself in the act of "shying" when his mother is around—she used to throw things at him when he was a boy! Blanche Sartorius is quite ready to hate her father at a moment's notice; no love is lost between Julia and Colonel Craven; Vivie Warren stands out determinedly against her mother's authority; and Frank, with nauseating levity, takes great delight in "jollyng" his reprobate father upon the indiscretions of his youth. Phil and Dolly are breezily disrespectful of parental rule; and Anne uses her maudlin mother as an excuse to do just whatever she wants. The thesis is part of Shaw's stock-in-trade, and might be regarded as

a mere comic *motif*, were it not for the "damnable iteration" of the thing. Adrian Herbert avows his positive dislike for his mother, because, as he affirms, their natures are antagonistic, their views of life and duty incompatible because they have nothing in common. We must take Shaw's insistence upon incompatibility of temperament between blood relations with a good many grains of salt. It is not even half true that every mother tries to defeat every cherished project of her sons "by sarcasms, by threats, and, failing these, by cajolery"; that everyone's childhood has been "embittered by the dislike of his mother and the ill-temper of his father"; that every man's wife soon ceases to care for him and that he soon tires of her; that every man's brother goes to law with him over the division of the family property; and that every man's son acts in studied defiance of his plans and wishes. These things are only true enough to be funny; just enough of them happen in real life to give Shaw's thesis a sort of comic plausibility. It is the phrases, "love is eternal," and "blood is thicker than water," rather than the facts themselves, which make the iconoclastic Shaw see red. I find some explanation of his view in pardonable revolt, as a dramatist, against that persistent superabundance of French melodrama—the *voir du sang*. Some explanation of Shaw's views in the matter may possibly be found in the facts of his own personal experience; at any rate, he once said that the word education brought to his mind four successive schools where his parents got him out of the way for half a day. Indeed, his campaign against the modern system of education springs from his recently expressed disgust with educators for *concealing* the fact that "the real object of that system is to relieve parents from the insufferable company and anxious care of their children." Continuing in the same strain, he says:

"Until it is frankly recognized that children are nuisances to adults except at playful moments, and that the first social need that arises from the necessary existence of children in a community is that there should be some adequate defence of the comparative quiet and order of adult life against the comparative noise, racket, untidiness, in-

quisitiveness, restlessness, intrusiveness, shrewishness, dirt, destruction and mischief, which are healthy and natural for children, and which are no reason for denying them the personal respect without which their characters cannot grow and set properly, we shall have the present pretence of inexhaustible parental tenderness, moulding of character, inculcation of principles, and so forth, to cloak the imprisoning, drilling, punishing, tormenting, brigading, boy and girl farming, which saves those who can afford it from having to scream ten times every hour, 'Stop that noise, Tommy, or I'll clout your head for you.' *

With gradual, yet unhalting steps, Shaw works his way to those startling and topsy-turvy theories which are so delightfully credible to the *intellectuals* and so bewilderingly exasperating to the Philistines. In *Love Among the Artists*, Madge Brailsford's open avowal to Owen Jack of her love for him gives a hint that the theory of woman as the huntress and man as the quarry is upon us. But quite the contrary course is taken in *Cashel Byron's Profession*, Shaw's next novel. Cashel Byron, the perfect pugilist, fights his way into the good graces of the "high-born" heiress, Lydia Carew, by the straight exhibition of his physical prowess. The whole book is conceived in such broadly satirical vein that it is impossible for me to accept it as anything except a boyishly irrepressible pasquinade. Fortunately, the "little bits of Socialism that were daubed in" here and there at first, were afterwards deleted; the current version is a novel, pure and simple, with no discoverable Socialistic thesis behind it. Shaw's explanation that the book was written as an offset to the "abominable vein of retaliatory violence" that runs all through the literature of the nineteenth century need not detain us here; Shaw has made out his own case with sufficiently paradoxical cleverness in the inevitable preface. He spends one-half of his time in explaining his actions during the other half; and it has even been unkindly hinted that each new book of

* *Does Modern Education Ennoble?* In *Great Thoughts*, October 7th, 1905.

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his serves merely as an excuse for writing another preface. And it should be remembered that the preface to *Cashel Byron's Profession* was written some eighteen years later than was the book itself—ample time for Shaw to devise any excuse for representing his book as a deliberate challenge to British ideals. Suffice it to say that a comparison of *Cashel Byron's Profession* with *Rodney Stone*, for example, will make plain the distinction between the realism and the romance of pugilism. And while Byron's exhibitions of physical prowess are the most "howlingly funny" incidents in the book, it is nevertheless true that Shaw has done nothing to surround the "noble art of *sluggerci*" with any halo of fictitious romance.* "Its novelty," as Shaw himself maintains, "consists in the fact that an attempt is made to treat the art of punching seriously, and to detach it from the general elevation of moral character with which the ordinary novelist persists in associating it."

The real novelty, and, indeed, the chief charm, of the book consists rather in the fact that no attempt is made to treat anything seriously. So far as the prize-ring is concerned, the book's realism is veracious; the rest is the frankest of popular melodrama. What appeals more strongly to the popular heart than a low-born but invincible slugger fighting his way, round after round, to the side of a noble and fabulously wealthy heroine! What more oracularly Adelpheic in its melodrama than the "finger of fate" upon the "long arm of coincidence" directing Cashel's mother to the mansion of Miss Lydia Carew! And what an exquisite fulfilment of poetic justice—the ultimate discovery that Cashel is a scion of one of the oldest county families in England, and heir to a great estate! The thing that makes the book go, of course, is its peculiarly Shavian cast—the combination of what Stevenson called "struggling, overlaid original talent" and "blooming gaseous folly." Shaw's sense of dramatic situation continually foreshadows the future play.

*A dramatization of the novel, by Mr. Stanislaus Stange, was produced with moderate success in New York several years ago. Unique interest attached to the production because the part of Cashel Byron was

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wright. The abounding humour of the exquisitely ludicrous scene at the reception—the devastating comicality of the brute, with his native “mother wit,” turned rough and-ready philosopher! When Cashel is set down in the midst of this ethical-artistic circle, he breezily exceeds all the professors—for he discusses art *positively*, in the terminology of his own profession, in which he is a past master. The sublime hardihood of elucidating Beethoven and Wagner in terms of the pugilistic art of Jack Randall! And Bashville, over whom Stevenson howled with derision and delight, what a brief for democratic Socialism is Bashville—prototype for the Admirable Crichton and Henry Straker—keenly conscious of his own absurdity, yet zealously standing out in defence of his mistress and in insistence upon the truly democratic doctrine of “equal rights for all, special privileges for none.” Who cannot sympathize with Stevenson: “I dote on Bashville—I could read of him for ever; *de Bashville je suis le fervent*—there is only one Bashville, and I am his devoted slave; *Bashville est magnifique, mais il n'est guère possible.*” Or when he says: “Bashville—O Bashville! *j'en chortle* (which is finely polyglot).” Service is as sacred to Bashville as pugilism is to Cashel. Each is the “ideal” professional man, who magnifies his office and measures up to the height of his own profession. Each demands recognition for fulfilling to the best of his ability his own special function in life. Shaw insists that the real worth of a man is not to be measured by the social standing of his profession, but in terms of his professional efficiency.

Shaw's mastery of the portrayal of striking contrasts is exhibited in the case of Cashel Byron and Lydia Carew. There is a strong hint of the “female Yahoo” in Lydia's avowal to her aristocratic suitor: “I practically believe in the doctrine of heredity; and as my body is frail and my brain morbidly active, I think my impulse towards a man strong in body and untroubled in mind is a trustworthy one. You can understand that; it is a plain proposition in eugenics.” This was fun to Stevenson—but “horrid fun.” His postscript is laconically eloquent: “(I say, Archer, my God! what women!)” William Morris seems

to have had the rights in the matter in describing Lydia, to Shaw privately, as a "prig ess." Shaw grandiloquently speaks of her as "superhuman all through," a "working model" of an "improved type" of womanhood. "Let me not deny, however . . .," he remarks, "that a post mortem examination by a capable critical anatomist—probably my biographer—will reveal the fact that her inside is full of wheels and springs." The book closes on a mildly Shavian note—the romance has dwindled to banality. "Cashel's admiration for his wife survived the ardour of his first love for her; and her habitual forethought saved her from disappointing his reliance on her judgment."

All that was needed to expose the threadbare plot of *Cashel Byron's Profession* was *The Admirable Bashville, or Constancy Unrewarded*—Shaw's blank-verse stage version of the novel. This delightful jest was perpetrated in defence of the stage-right of the novel, which threatened to pass into unworthy hands through the malign workings of that "foolish anomaly," the English Copyright Law. In Shaw's celebrated lecture on Shakespeare, at Kensington Town Hall, section 10, as given in his abstract, reads as follows:

"That to anyone with the requisite ear and command of words, blank verse, written under the amazingly loose conditions which Shakespeare claimed, with full liberty to use all sorts of words, colloquial, technical, rhetorical, and obscurely technical, to indulge in the most far fetched ellipses, and to impress ignorant people with every possible extremity of fantasy and affectation, is the easiest of all known modes of literary expression, and that this is why whole oceans of dull bombast and drivel have been emptied on the heads of England since Shakespeare's time in this form by people who could not have written *Rox and Cox* to save their lives. Also (this on being challenged) that I can write blank verse myself more swiftly than prose, and that, too, of full Elizabethan quality plus the Shakespearean sense of the absurdity of it as expressed in the lines of *Antient Pistol*. What is more, that I have done it,

published it, and had it performed on the stage with huge applause." *

Liking the "melodious sing-song, the clear, simple, one-line and two-line sayings, and the occasional rhymed tags, like the half-closes in an eighteenth-century symphony, in Peele, Kid, Greene, and the histories of Shakespeare," Shaw quite naturally "poetasted *The Admirable Bashville* in the rigmarole style." After illustrating how unspeakably bad Shakespearean blank verse is, Shaw ludicrously claims that his own is "just as good." Nor is it possible to deny that his own blank verse positively scintillates with the Shakespearean—or is it Shavian?—sense of its absurdity. The preface to *The Admirable Bashville* has the genuine Shavian *timbre*, with its solemn fooling, its portentous levity, its false premisses and ludicrous conclusions. In that preface, as Mr. Archer puts it, Shaw "defends the woodenness of his blank verse by arguing that wooden blank verse is the best. That, at any rate, is the gist of his contention, though he does not put it in just that way."

The play—for despite Shaw's prefaces, the play's the thing—is a truly admirable burlesque of rhetorical drama. Not Bashville, but Cashel only is admirable; it is Cashel's constancy that is rewarded. The piece is couched in a tone of the most delicious extravagance—a hit, a palpable hit, in every line. I cannot resist the temptation to quote from the scene in which Lydia, Lucian, and Bashville, fast locked against intrusion, debate the question of admitting Cashel, the presumably infuriated ruffian, who has just been successfully tripped up by Bashville as he is trying to enter the Carew mansion.

LYDIA: We must not fail in courage with a fighter.
Unlock the door.

LUCIAN: Like all women, Lydia,
You have the courage of immunity.
To strike *you* were against his code of honour;
But *me*, above the belt, he may perform on
T' th' height of his profession. Also Bashville.

* *Bernard Shaw Abashed*. In the *Daily News*, April 17th, 1905.

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- BASHVILLE: Think not of me, sir. Let him do his worst.
Oh, if the valour of my heart could weigh
The fatal difference 'twixt his weight and mine,
A second battle should he do this day:
Nay, though outmatched I be, let but my mistress
Give me the word: instant I'll take him on
Here—now—at catchweight. Better bite the
carpet
A man, than fly, a coward.
- LUCIAN: Bravely said:
I will assist you with the poker.

And well worth remembering is the naïve autobiography, delivered at the request of the Zulu king, of that celestially denominated "bruiser" concerning whom Cashel once said: "Slave to the ring I rest until the face of Paradise be changed."

- CETEKWAYO: Ye sons of the white queen:
Tell me your names and deeds ere ye fall to.
- PARADISE: Your royal highness, you behold a bloke
What gets his living honest by his fists.
I may not have the polish of some toffs
As I could mention on; but up to now
No man has took my number down. I scale
Close on twelve stun; my age is twenty-three;
And at Bill Richardson's "Blue Anchor" pub
Am to be heard of any day by such
As likes the job. I don't know, governor,
As ennythink remains for me to say.

Those who witnessed the original production of the play by the London Stage Society in 1908, and also the later production in 1909 at the "Afternoon Theatre" (His Majesty's), unhesitatingly gave it that "huge applause" of which Shaw speaks so frankly. "The best burlesque of rhetorical drama in the language," is Mr. Archer's sweeping dictum. Even the most hardened of Philistines might find it easy to agree with his statement: "Fielding's 'Tom Thumb' and Carey's 'Chrononhototologos' are, it seems to me, not in the running."

Not until the appearance of *An Unsocial Socialist*, fifth of the novels of his nonage, is the Pandora's box of Shavian theories opened. There now begin to troop forth those startling and anarchic views with which the name of Shaw is popularly associated. This modern "*École des Maris*" heralds the reign of the "literature of effrontery"; Shaw is beginning to take his stride. With all its extravagance and waywardness, *An Unsocial Socialist* has been declared by at least one critic of authority to be as brilliant as anything George Meredith ever wrote. Let us recall Stevenson's warning to Shaw: "Let him beware of his damned century; his gifts of insane chivalry and animated narration are just those that might be slain and thrown out like an untimely birth by the Daemon of the Epoch." Gone are the chivalry and romance—the winds of Socialism have blown them all away. But the book fairly reeks of the "damned century," with its mad irresponsibility, its exasperating levity, its religious and social revolt. Written in 1888, it seethes and bubbles with the acum of the Socialist brew just then beginning to ferment. Shaw's original design, he tells us, was to "produce a novel which should be a gigantic grapple with the whole social problem. . . . When I had finished two chapters of this enterprise—chapters of colossal length, but containing the merest preliminary matter—I broke down in sheer ignorance and incapacity." Eventually the two prodigious chapters of Shaw's *magnum opus* were published as a complete novel, in two "books," under the title *An Unsocial Socialist*. Shaw begins fiercely to sermonize humanity, to deride all customs and institutions which have not their roots sunk in individualism and in social justice. The Seven Deadly Sins are: respectability, conventional virtue, filial affection, modesty, sentiment, devotion to woman, romance. Sidney Trefusis is the philosopher of the New Order, revolted by the rottenness of present civilization and resolved, by any means, to set in motion some schemes for its reformation. Discovering too late that marriage to him, as to Tanner, means "apostasy, profanation of the sanctuary of his soul, violation of his manhood, sale of his birthright, shameful surrender, ignominious capitulation, acceptance of defeat," Trefusis deliberately deserts his wife, not because, as with Falk

and Svanhild in Ibsen's *Love's Comedy*, love seems too exquisite, too ethereal to be put to the illusion shattering test of marriage, but because marriage involves the triumph of senses over sense, of passion over reason. Even after he has ceased to love Henrietta, her love for him continues to set in motion the mechanism of passion, and he is revolted by the fact that she is satisfied so long as "the wheels go round."

The millionaire son of a captain of industry, Trefusis has, by a strange freak of fate, drunk deep of the Socialist draught of the epoch. Respecting his dead father for his energy and bravery among unscrupulous competitors in the struggle for existence, Trefusis curses his memory for the inhuman means employed in his business dealings and the social crimes concealed by the shimmer of his "ill-gotten gold."

His most significant utterance—an outburst before the wealthy landowner, Sir Charles Brandon—gives us a clear picture of Shaw's Socialist views at this time:

"A man cannot be a Christian: I have tried it, and found it impossible both in law and in fact. I am a capitalist and a landholder. I have railway shares, mining shares, building shares, bank shares, and stock of most kinds; and a great trouble they are to me. But these shares do not represent wealth actually in existence: they are a mortgage on the labour of unborn generations of labourers, who must work to keep me and mine in idleness and luxury. If I sold them, would the mortgage be cancelled and the unborn generations released from its thrall? No. It would only pass into the hands of some other capitalist; and the working classes would be no better off for my self-sacrifice. Sir Charles cannot obey the command of Christ: I defy him to do it. Let him give his land for a public park: only the richer classes will have leisure to enjoy it. Plant it at the very doors of the poor, so that they may at least breathe its air; and it will raise the value of the neighbouring houses and drive the poor away. Let him endow a school for the poor, like Eton or Christ's Hospital; and the rich will take it for their own children

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as they do in the two instances I have named. Sir Charles does not want to minister to poverty, but to abolish it. No matter how much you give to the poor, everything but a bare subsistence wage will be taken away from them again by force. All talk of practising Christianity, or even bare justice, is at present mere waste of words. How can you justly reward the labourer when you cannot ascertain the value of what he makes, owing to the prevalent custom of stealing it? . . . The principle on which we farm out our national industry to private marauders, who recompense themselves by blackmail, so corrupts and paralyses us that we cannot be honest even when we want to. And the reason we bear it so calmly is that very few of us really want to."

A Marx in Shaw's clothing, Trefusis devotes all his energies, all his wealth, to the task of forming an international association—"The International," history gives it—of men pledged "to share the world's work justly; to share the produce of the work justly; to yield not a farthing—charity apart—to any full-grown and able-bodied idler or malingerer, and to treat as vermin in the commonwealth persons attempting to get more than their share of wealth or give less than their share of work." Whole-souledly committed to Socialism in its iconoclastic aspects, Trefusis defies convention, prudery, delicacy, good-taste, and tact in all his actions, convinced beyond reclaim that "vile or not, whatever is true is to the purpose." His philosophy holds it a short-sighted policy to run away from a mistake or a misunderstanding, instead of "facing the music" and clearing the matter up. A licensed eccentric like his prototypic creator in real life, Trefusis is permitted to take liberties granted to no one else; and by the "exercise of a certain considerate tact (which, on the outside, perhaps, seems the opposite of tact)," but which in reality consists in the most ingenious double-dealing, he somehow or other contrives to have his way and go scot-free.

In the early part of the story, disguised as that "terrific combination of nerves, gall, and brains," Smilash, he dexterously philanders to his heart's content with several young girls at

the boarding-school where his wife was educated. The verisimilitude of the portraits, the acute psychology exhibited in the portrayal of the feelings, sentiments, and sentimentalities of young girls in the boarding school stage of evolution, testify to Shaw's remarkable gifts as a genuine realist. That forerunner of Julia Craven, the romantic little Henrietta Janssens, is portrayed with insight, and not without delicacy and restraint. The most unreal, most unhuman scene in the book is that in which Trefusis apostrophizes the body of his dead wife. His reflections impress me as both flippant and callous in their solemn setting. It is with a sense of profound shock that we hear him rudely flout the "funereal sanctimoniousness" of the family physician, mock at the "harrowing mummeries" of religious and social observance, and "daunt the feelings" of a father and mother who regarded their daughter as their chattel and showed no true feeling for her when she was alive. Trefusis is devoured with the conviction that the first, if the hardest, of all duties is one's duty to one's self. His fine Italian hand is betrayed in his later philanderings with the whilom loves of Smilash, now grown up into disagreeable, hard, calculating women. Trefusis's trickery of Sir Charles Brandon, his unfeeling deception of Gertrude Lindsay, his base flattery of Lady Brandon, his misleading promise to Erskine, are all exhibitions of his Jesuitical policy. The exponent of Socialism and the New Morality, Trefusis has no scruples in employing unfair means to secure whatsoever he wants—for the cause of labour and for himself.*

Mr. W. L. Courtney has somewhere called attention to the curious triumph achieved by "our only modern dramatist," as he calls Bernard Shaw, in view of the fact that Shaw has never hesitated at interpreting women as beasts of prey. In the novels we find premonitions of Shaw's later attitude toward

* "The hero is remarkable because, without losing his pre-eminence as hero, he not only violates every canon of propriety, like Tom Jones or Des Grieux, but every canon of sentiment as well. In an age when the average man's character is rotted at the core by the lust to be a true gentleman, the moral value of such an example as Trefusis is incalculable."—*Mr. Bernard Shaw's Works of Fiction. Reviewed by Himself. In the Novel Review*, February, 1892.

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women. Some suspicion of Shaw's theory that woman "takes the initiative in sex business" dawns upon us when Madge Brailsford openly courts Owen Jack; but Lydia Carew, that bloodless Ibsen type, is anything but the huntress. *An Unsocial Socialist* opens our eyes; for Henrietta shamelessly pursues the mocking Trefusis and exhausts every feminine wile in the effort to induce him to return to the chains of wedlock. The idea is also uppermost in the final scene, in which Trefusis, by means of a little diabolically concocted sentiment, persuades the pursuing Gertrude to give him up, and, "for his sake," to marry Erskine. When Shaw came to erect his theory into a system in *Man and Superman*, he threw a flood of light upon all his former work. There is a keynote to the philosophy of every great or pioneer thinker: Shakespeare had his Hamlet, Wagner his Free-willing of Necessity, Schopenhauer his Will to Live, and Nietzsche his Will to Power. So Shaw is the apostle of the Life Force, as he calls it; and woman is incarnate life force—potent instrument of that irresistible, secret, blind impulse which Nature wields for her own transcendent purposes, heedless of the feelings, welfare, or happiness of individuals. Recognizing woman as the primal vital agency in the fulfilment of Nature's laws, he has not unnaturally come to regard her as "much more formidable than man, because she is, as it were, archetypal, belonging to the original structure of things, and has behind her activity, sometimes benevolent and more often malevolent, the great authority of Nature herself." * Under the spell of this plausible conviction, Shaw endows woman with all the attributes of a blind, unreasoning, unscrupulous force of nature. And for his faith he can find ample support in the literature of an age which produced Schopenhauer's *Essay on Woman*, *The Master Builder*, *Little Eyolf*, *The Triumph of Death*, *Gräfin Julie*, *Erdegeist*, *The Confounding of Camellia*. With great adroitness, but with a curious inconsistency in one who has spent years of his life in "blaming the Bard," Shaw finds the chief support for his claim in the plays of Shakespeare himself. By blandishment, Rosalind accomplishes her purpose; Miranda

* The words are those of Mr. W. L. Courtney.

ensnares Ferdinand with the words, "I would not wish any companion in the world but you. I am your wife if you will marry me." Juliet scales Romeo's defences one by one, and there is Desdemona with her fond "hint"; Mariana, the strategist; Helena, pursuing the recreant Bertram; Olivia, powerless to hide her passion; and poor, mad, melancholy Ophelia.

One has only to pass in review Shaw's work, from *An Unsocial Socialist* to *Man and Superman*, to discover that persistent exemplification of his theory that "woman is the pursuer and contriver, man the pursued and disposed of." Indeed, in his very first play, we find Shaw's concrete illustration of Don Juan's statement that "a woman seeking a husband is the most unscrupulous of all the beasts of prey." All the men in Shaw's plays seem to suffer, not from Prossy's, but from Charteris's complaint: "At no time have I taken the initiative and pursued women with my advances as women have persecuted me." All seem to labour under the conviction that the woman's need of a man "does not prevail against him until his resistance gathers her energy to a climax, at which she dares to throw away her customary exploitations of the conventional affectionate and dutiful poses, and claim him by natural right for a purpose that far transcends their mortal personal purposes." The quintessence of the Shavian woman is Ann Whitefield, that "most gorgeous of all my female creatures," as Shaw calls her—incarnation of fecundity in Nature, wilful, unscrupulous, immodest, aggressive, dominant—compelling Tanner to obey her biological imperative.

The appearance of Shaw's theory in *An Unsocial Socialist* is responsible for this divagation of mine from the theme of the novels, this anticipation of the feminine psychology of the plays. It is highly unreasonable to suppose that the exploitation of such a theory on Shaw's part is a perverse and impish trick, designed solely *épater le bourgeois*; Shaw has driven home his theory in countless deliberate statements. As a philosophic concept, as an interpretation of woman by an a-priorist, little fault can be found with Shaw in the matter. No one can question Shaw's right to his opinion. Even as an effort to make the

modern English drama, Shaw's delineation of woman is far from being unworthy of consideration, though it has swung wide of the mark in exaggerative reaction against the romantic sentimentalities of the English stage. Shaw's women are full of purpose and vitality—the most “advanced” of women in assertion of their rights, in resolute determination to override all the barriers of current respectability and “prurient prudery,” in perfect readiness to forego all considerations of good taste, tact, delicacy, modesty, conventional virtue. They ruthlessly repudiate all those qualities which have led man to dub her his “better half.” Shaw's mistake consists in painting woman, not as she really, normally is, but as his preconceived philosophic system requires her to be. He plunks down for our inspection less a life-like portrait of the eternal feminine than a philosophic interpretation of the “superior sex.” Shaw is a remarkable critic of life. Certain phases of human nature, unnoticed or unaccented by others, he has depicted with a veracity, a cleverness, a sparkling brilliancy beyond all praise. But it is one thing to portray an individual, a totally different thing to announce a universal type. A soldier like Bluntschli, a dare devil like Dodgeon, a minister like Gardner, a hero like Caesar or Napoleon, a wooer like Valentine, a Socialist like Trefusis, a pugilist like Byron—all these may have lived. Shaw doubtless can—indeed, sometimes does—point to their counterparts, if not in literature, certainly in real life. But to say that all soldiers are like Bluntschli, for example, is little more foolish than to say that all women are like Blanche, like Julia, like Ann. The vital defect in Shaw's women is that they are too blatant, too obvious, too crude. They are lacking in mystery, in finer subtlety, in the subconscious and obscurer instincts of sex, in the arts of exquisite seduction, of keenly-felt yet only half-divined allurements.* The Life Force goes about its business, one would fain remind Mr. Shaw, not openly and with a blare of trumpets, but by a thousand devious and hidden paths. Of course, there is always the danger of taking

* There are exceptions to this generalization, of course—Lady Cletty, Candida, Nora, Jennifer, Barbara.

Shaw too seriously. Mr. Archer wittily, but, above all, entirely truthfully, dubbed Ann a "mythological monster." As a pendant to Everyman of the Dutch morality, Ann may be the Everywoman of the Shavian morality. But even Shaw himself admits, with wily fairness, that while, philosophically, Ann may be Everywoman according to the Shavian dispensation, yet in practical, every-day existence there are countless women who are not Ann.

If faith is to be placed in M. Émile Faguet's dictum that no exceptional work of art is ever written by anyone before reaching the age of thirty, then Shaw's novels are debarred by the Statute of Limitations. The "ineptitude" of his novels, of which Mr. Shaw once spoke to me, is attributable to the fact that during this early period he fed upon his imagination. He had not yet come into any deep or really vital communion with humanity. Produced in that impressionable period when dreaming seems preferable to living, the novels bristle with faults—immaturities of form, crudenesses of expression, blatant didactics. They are often loose and disjointed, generally lacking in closely articulated structure. With all his pretended effort at realism, Shaw has failed to impart to his novels that one quality without which no modern work of fictive art can take the very highest rank—inevitableness. To Shaw, as to Zola, art is life seen through a temperament. And I often receive the impression that Shaw's novels are less faithful records of contemporary existence than documents revelative of Bernard Shaw. Shaw is lacking in artistic self-restraint; like the true propagandist, he seems almost unwilling to accept facts as they are, so eager is he to impose upon them the stamp of his individual predilections. It is the strangest of paradoxes that one who claims for himself that rare and priceless gift—the abnormally normal eyesight of the realist—should have spent his life in the endeavour to fix the mask of Shaw upon the face of life.

"The gods know that Bernard Shaw has many sins of omission to answer for when he reaches the remotest peak of Parnassus," writes Mr. Huneker; "but for no one of his many gifts will he be so sternly taken to task as the wasted one of novelist. . . . There is more native talent for sturdy, clear-

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visioned, character creating fiction in the one prize-fighting novel of Bernard Shaw than in the entire cobweb work of the stylistic Stevenson! . . . Shaw could rank higher as a novelist than as a dramatist - always selecting for judgment the supreme pages of his tales, pages wherein character, wit, humour, pathos, fantasy, and observation are mingled with an overwhelming effect." * While there is much of truth in what Mr. Huneker says, I should hold quite the opposite opinion concerning Shaw's relative merits as novelist and dramatist. Not the least significant feature of the novels, to my mind, is their foreshadowing of the future dramatist.† Turning over the pages of the novels, from first to last one cannot but observe this recurrent trait: Shaw always sees his characters in a "situation." It is difficult to read one of Shaw's novels without unconsciously looking for the stage directions. Proud as he is of his gifts as a "fictionist," no one is more conscious than is Shaw himself of his deficiencies in this rôle. With his customary succinctness, he once put the case to me as it really is: "My novels are very green things, very carefully written."

* *Bernard Shaw and Woman*. In *Harper's Bazar*, June, 1905.

† It is worthy of remark that the conclusion of *Love Among the Artists*, as Julius Bab has pointed out, accurately prefigures the conclusion of *Candida*. The situation, the very words, are almost identical.



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"If ever there was a society which lived by its wits, and by its wits alone, that society was the Fabian."—*The Fabian Society*. Tract No. 41.
By G. B. Shaw.

CHAPTER IV

FOR the student of Shaw's work and career, there is no escape from the resemblance, superficial or vital, between Shaw himself and the numerous comic figures he has projected upon the stage. Like that Byronic impostor, Saranoff, Shaw has gone through life afflicted with a multiplicity of personalities. In *The Autocrat of the Breakfast Table*, Oliver Wendell Holmes said that when two people meet, there are always six persons present. But Shaw needs no party of the second part to sum up the total of personalities: he is eternally dogged with his own ubiquitous *aliases*. Bernard Shaw, the "fictionist"; Corno di Bassetto, the music critic of admirable fooling and pungent criticism; G. B. S., the apostle of comic *intransigence* in criticism of art, music, and drama—and life; "P-Shaw," the Gilbertian topsy-turvyist of essay and drama; George Bernard Shaw, Fabian, economist, public speaker, borough councillor, reformer—all these distinct characters is Shaw, in Maeterlinckian phrase, constantly meeting upon the highway of fate. It is the province of the biographer to detect, among this confusing cloud of *aliases*, the real man.

In 1883, the career of Bernard Shaw the "fictionist" came to an abrupt and final conclusion. While this first and introductory chapter in the book of Shaw's multiplex life was being written, the material for another and infinitely more important chapter was slowly being collected and arranged. With this second chapter begins the life of the real Shaw.

As he himself has told us, his parents pulled him through the years in which he earned nothing. But he was perpetually "grinding away" at something, perpetually feeling his way towards confidence and efficiency. The diversity of his interests was remarkable: nothing he touched proved banal or unfruitful. This universality of interests—the determination to grasp, the effort to master, every subject that came to his hand—is little

less than conclusive as an explanation of his many-sidedness. "I did not start life with a programme. I simply accepted every job offered to me, and I did it the best way I could." In this simple and straightforward statement is found the key to that diversity of talent, that range of ability, which is perhaps the most striking and noteworthy characteristic of this rare and eccentric genius.

The decisive and revolutionary changes in Shaw's truly "chequered" career were due, in almost all cases, to the adventitious or deliberate influence of some dominant personality in literature or in life. The crucial conjunctures in his career are closely associated with the names of Shelley, Ibsen, Nietzsche, Marx, Wagner, Mozart and Michael Angelo, in art, music, literature and philosophy; with the names and personalities, among others, in life of James Leigh Joynes, the Salt family, Henry George, Sidney Webb, William Morris and William Archer.

In Shaw's acquaintance with the late James Lecky * is found the germ of that strenuous propagandist activity which may be called the most definitive expression of Shaw's life. It was in 1879 that Shaw first became intimate with Lecky and with those various subjects, connected with music and languages on the scientific side, to which Lecky devoted so much of his energy and attention. Once interested in some pursuit, Lecky would become so enthused that he would demand of his friends an interest therein commensurate with his own. This pestiferously altruistic spirit of Lecky's proved of great value to Shaw, who set his critical brain to work upon many of the problems which Lecky brought to his attention. Through Lecky, Shaw acquired a working knowledge of Temperament, concerning which he once boasted that he was probably the only living musical critic who knew what it meant; and a due appreciation of Pitman's Shorthand—which he could write at the rate of twenty words per minute and could not read afterwards on any terms!—as probably the worst system of shorthand ever

* Author of the article on Temperament (systems of tuning keyed instruments) in the first edition of *Grove's Dictionary of Music*.

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invented, yet the best pushed on its business side. Together Lecky and Shaw studied and discussed Phonetics, and while Shaw's knowledge of the subject was by no means exhaustive, his interest in it has since served as a permanent protection against such superficial catch-penny stuff as the reformed spellings that are invented every six months by faddists. Shaw's individual mode of punctuation, his use of spaced letters in place of italics, his almost total rejection, on Biblical authority, which he accepted for once, of quotation marks, and those numerous original rules of punctuation and phonetics which he has from time to time formulated in magazine and daily press,* find their *raison d'être* in Shaw's early association with Lecky and subsequent acquaintance, through Lecky's instrumentality, with the late Alexander Ellis and Henry Sweet, of Oxford. As readers of the notes to *Captain Brassbound's Conversion* may gather, Shaw accepts Sweet as his authority; indeed, he highly values his acquaintance with that "revolutionary don," as he calls him, and once said that, in any other place or country in the world, Sweet would be better known than even Shaw himself. The knowledge of phonetics, the interest in language-reform acquired through his acquaintance with men like Lecky, Ellis and Sweet is the explanation, Mr. Shaw once told me, of the fact that the Cockney dialect, which so befuddles and astounds the readers of *Captain Brassbound's Conversion*, is far more scientific in its analysis of London coast-lingo than anything that had previously occurred in fiction.

In the winter of 1879, Lecky joined a debating club, called 'The Zetetical Society, numbering among its members Mr. Sidney Webb, Mr. Emil Garcke, and Mr. J. G. Godard. It was a sort of "junior copy" of the once well-known Dialectical Society, which had been founded to discuss Stuart Mill's essay on Lib-

* Among Shaw's many articles on these topics, may be cited the following: *A Plan for Speech Nationalization*, in the *Morning Leader*, August 16th, 1901; *Phonetic Spelling a Reply to Some Criticisms*, *ibid.*, August 22d, 1901; *Notes on the Clarendon Press Rules for Compositors and Readers*, in *The Author*, April, 1902, pp. 171-2. See also Mr. William Archer's two articles: *Spelling Reform v. Phonetic Spelling*, in the *Daily News*, August 10th, 1901; and *Shaw's Phonetic World-English*, in the *Morning Leader*, August 24th, 1901.

erty not long after its appearance in print. Both societies were strongly Millite; in both there was complete freedom of discussion, political, religious and sexual. Women took a prominent part in the debates, which often dealt with subjects concerning their rights, interests and welfare. A noteworthy feature of these debates, particularly in relation to Shaw's future development as a public speaker, and a critic as well, was that each speaker, at the conclusion of his speech, might be cross-examined on it by any one of the others in a series of questions. In this society Malthus, Ingersoll, Darwin and Herbert Spencer were held in especial reverence. The works of Huxley, Tyndall and George Eliot were on the shelves of all the members. The tone of the society was very "advanced"—individualistic, atheistic, evolutionary. Championship of the Married Woman's Property Act was scarcely silenced by the Act itself. The fact that Mrs. Besant's children were torn from her like Shelley's, aroused hot indignation, as did the prosecutions for "blasphemy" then going on. It is not without significance that, even at this time, Shaw was Socialist enough to defend the action of the State in both cases. Indeed, he has always been, as he once told me, somewhat of Morris's opinion that "There may be some doubt as to who are the best people to have charge of children; but there can be no doubt that the parents are the worst." Strange jest of fate, Shaw began his career by joining a society whose members regarded Socialism as an exploded fallacy! How little did anyone dream that, even then, underground rumblings of the approaching revolution might be faintly heard! That recurrent quindecentennial cycle of Socialistic upheaval of which Karl Kautsky has somewhere spoken, was well-nigh completed. Within five years Socialism was to burst forth with fresh impetus, sweep the younger generation along with it, and plunge the Dialectical and Zetetical Societies into the "blind cave of eternal night."

One night in the winter of 1879, Lecky dragged Shaw to a meeting of the Zetetical Society, which then met weekly in the rooms of the Woman's Protective and Provident League in Great Queen Street, Long Acre. It will be related elsewhere why Shaw decided to join the society at once; suffice it to say



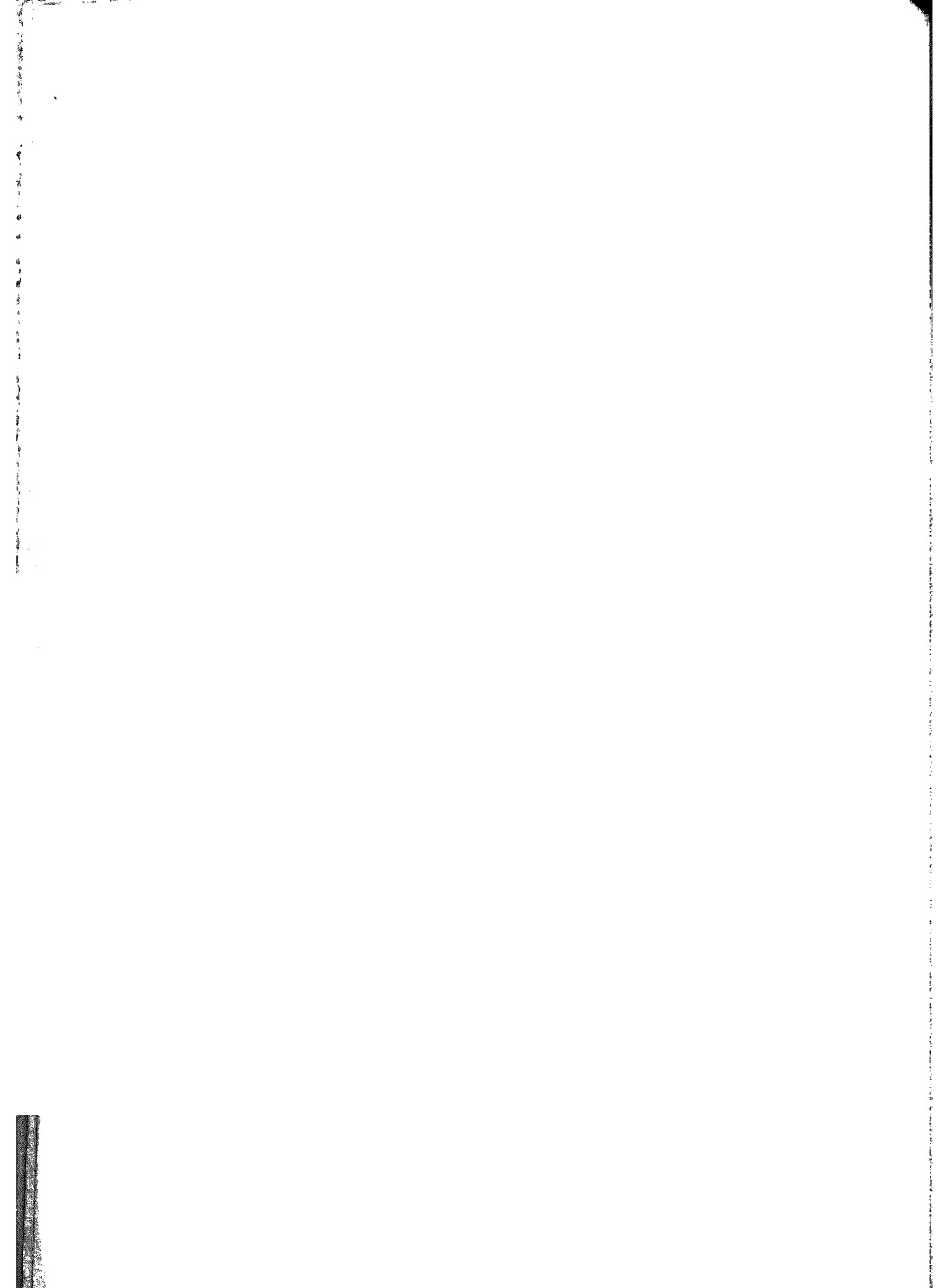
Henry Widd

Portrait of Henry Widd

HENRY WIDD

Reproduced from the original photo-drawing

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here that he became a frequent attendant upon the meetings of the society, entering actively, if haltingly, into discussion and debate. The importance, in its bearing upon Shaw's subsequent career as a man of affairs and a man of letters, of an acquaintance he formed at this time through the accident of joining the Zetetical Society, can scarcely be overestimated. A few weeks after joining the society Shaw's keenest interest was aroused in a speaker who took part in one of the debates. This speaker was a young man of about twenty-one, rather below middle height, with small, pretty hands and feet, and a profile that suggested, on account of the nose and imperial, an improvement on Napoleon the Third. I well remember the animated way in which Mr. Shaw described to me the man and the occurrence. "He had a fine forehead, a long head, eyes that were built on top of two highly developed organs of speech (according to the phrenologists), and remarkably thick, strong, dark hair. He knew all about the subject of debate; knew more than the lecturer; knew more than anybody present; had read everything that had ever been written on the subject; and remembered all the facts that bore on it. He used notes, read them, ticked them off one by one, threw them away, and finished with a coolness and clearness that, to me in my then trembling state, seemed miraculous. This young man was the ablest man in England—Sidney Webb." Then a trembling novice, yet subsequently to be known as the cleverest man in England, Shaw to-day does not hesitate to pay full honour to the part Sidney Webb has played in his career. The extent and value of this association will reveal itself in due course. Shaw has said and done a thousand clever things; but, as he once freely confessed to me, "Quite the cleverest thing I ever did in my life was to force my friendship on Webb, to extort his, and keep it."

After Shaw had been a member of the Zetetical Society for about a year, he joined the Dialectical Society, and was faithful to it for years after it had dwindled into a little group of five or six friends of Dr. Drysdale, the apostle of Malthus. Shaw subsequently joined another debating society, the Bedford, presided over by Stopford Brooke, who had not then given up his pastorate at Bedford Chapel to devote himself exclusively to

literature. During these years, as we shall see more particularly in the next chapter, Shaw was slowly perfecting himself in the art of public speaking. The fascination of the platform grew upon him daily. He not only spoke frequently himself, but also attended public meetings of every sort, learning by precept, experience, and example the secrets of the art of platform speaking. With dogged persistence, he was surely, if slowly, acquiring what he himself has called the coolness, the self-confidence and the imperturbability of the statesman.

During these years he had gradually widened and deepened his knowledge of the subjects which periodically came up for discussion in the various debating societies he had joined. In his boyhood he had read Mill on Liberty, on Representative Government, and on the Irish Land Question. And he was fully the equal of his co-debaters in knowledge and comprehension of the evolutionary ideas and theories of Darwin, Tyndall, Huxley, Spencer, George Eliot, and their school. But of political economy he knew absolutely nothing. It was in 1882 that his attention was first definitely directed into the economic channel.

England and Ireland were greatly stirred up at this time by the arrest of Henry George and James Leigh Joyce as "suspicious strangers" in Ireland (August, 1882). Joyce, a master of Eton, wishing to see something of the popular side of the Irish movement, accompanied George as a correspondent of the *London Times*. George was making an investigation of the situation in Ireland preliminary to his campaign of propaganda in behalf of his Single Tax theories, enunciated in *Progress and Poverty*. The arrest of George and Joyce, on the charge of being agents of the Fenians, was widely commented on in the newspapers of Great Britain and Ireland, and resulted in a Parliamentary questioning. *Progress and Poverty*, pronounced by Alfred Russel Wallace "undoubtedly the most remarkable and important work of the nineteenth century," began to sell by the thousands; it was prominently reviewed in the *London Times* and dozens of other papers; and George felt at last that he was "beginning to move the world." Further encouragement came from the Land Nationalization Society,

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which had been founded in London early in 1882, with Alfred Russel Wallace at its head.* "It contained in its membership," says Mr. Henry George, Jr., in his biography of his father, "those who, like Wallace, desired to take possession of the land by purchase and then have the State exact an annual quit-rent from whoever held it; those who had the Socialistic idea of having the State take possession of the land with or without compensation and then manage it; and those who, with Henry George, repudiated all idea of either compensation or of management, and would recognize common rights to land simply by having the State appropriate its annual value by taxation. Such conflicting elements could not long continue together, and soon those holding the George idea withdrew and organized on their own distinctive lines, giving the name of the Land Reform Union to their organization." While interest was at fever heat, George was invited by the Land Nationalization Society to lecture under the auspices of a working men's audience in Memorial Hall. The bill, a true copy of which lies before me, reads as follows:

LAND NATIONALIZATION.

MEMORIAL HALL,

FARRINGDON STREET,

On Tuesday, September 5th, 1882.

Under auspices of

THE LAND NATIONALIZATION SOCIETY.

Professor

F. W. NEWMAN

will preside.

George's speech that night was the torch that "kindled the fire in England"—a fire which he afterwards said no human power could put out. It was the masses that George was trying to educate and arouse. It was the masses whose ear he caught that night.

* Compare *Land Nationalization: Its Necessity and Its Aims*, by Alfred Russel Wallace. Swan, Sonnenschein and Co., 1892.

At that time, Bernard Shaw eagerly haunted public meetings of all kinds. By a strange chance, he wandered that night into the Memorial Hall in Farringdon Street. The speaker of the evening was Henry George: his speech wrought a miracle in Shaw's whole life. It "kindled the fire" in his soul. "It flashed on me then for the first time," Shaw once wrote, "that 'the conflict between Religion and Science' . . . the overthrow of the Bible, the higher education of women, Mill on Liberty, and all the rest of the storm that raged round Darwin, Tyndall, Huxley, Spencer, and the rest, on which I had brought myself up intellectually, was a mere middle class business. Suppose it could have produced a nation of Matthew Arnolds and George Eliots!—you may well shudder. The importance of the economic basis dawned on me." * Shaw now read *Progress and Poverty*; and many of the observations which the fifteen-year-old Shaw had unconsciously made now took on a significance little suspected in the early Dublin days of his indifference to land agency.†

Shaw was so profoundly impressed by the logic of Henry George's conclusions and suggested remedial measures that, shortly after reading *Progress and Poverty*, he went to a meeting of the Social Democratic Federation, and there arose to protest against their drawing a red herring across the track opened by George. The only satisfaction he had was to be told that he was a novice: "Read Marx's *Capital*, young man," was the condescending retort of the Social Democrats. Shaw promptly

* Compare Chapter VI. for Shaw's own account of his conversation by Henry George.

† No more significant contradiction between practice and conviction can be found in Shaw's career than lies inherent in the fact that he began life by collecting Irish rental. "These hands have grasped the hard earned shillings of the sweated husbandman, and handed them over, not to the landlord—he, poor devil! had nothing to do with it but to the mortgagee, with a suitable deduction for my principal who taught me these arts." Not without its spice of humour, also, is the fact that Shaw is to-day an absentee landlord, having derived from his mother an estate on which her family lived for generations by mortgaging. No wonder that Mr. Shaw contemplates with mingled feelings that process, which he has condemned from a thousand platforms, being carried on in his name between his agents and his mortgagees!

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went and did so, and then found, as he once said, that his advisers were awestruck, as they had not read it themselves! It was then accessible only in the French version at the British Museum. William Archer has testified to the diligence with which Shaw studied Marx's great work; he caught his first glimpse of Shaw in the British Museum Library, where he noticed a "young man of tawny complexion and attire" studying alternately—if not simultaneously—*Das Kapital*, and an orchestral score of *Tristan and Isolde*!

While Darwin, Huxley, Spencer and their school left a distinct impress upon Shaw's mind, it is nevertheless true that he never became a Darwinian. To-day he is violently opposed to Darwinian materialism; and yet the Shavian philosophy, historically considered, is a natural consequence of that bitter fight against convention, custom, authority, and orthodoxy, inaugurated by Darwin and his followers. But Shaw's sociologic doctrine is a distillation, not of the *Descent of Man* or of the *Data of Ethics*, but of *Das Kapital*. At this crucial period in Shaw's career he was exactly in the mood for Marx's reduction of all the conflicts to the conflict of classes for economic mastery, of all social forms to the economic forms of production and exchange. The real secret of Marx's fascination for him, as he once said, was "his appeal to an unnamed, unrecognized passion—a new passion—the passion of hatred in the more generous souls among the respectable and educated sections for the accursed middle class institutions that had starved, thwarted, misled, and corrupted them from their cradles." In Marx, Shaw found a kindred spirit; for, like Marx, his whole life had bred in him a defiance of middle-class respectability, of revolt against its benumbing and paralyzing influence. As Shaw once said:

"Marx's '*Capital*' is not a treatise on Socialism; it is a jeremiad against the *bourgeoisie*, supported by such a mass of evidence and such a relentless genius for denunciation as had never been brought to bear before. It was supposed to be written for the working classes; but the working

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Marx never got hold of him for a moment. It was the revolting sons of the *bourgeoisie* itself—Lassalle, Marx, Liebknecht, Morris, Hyndman, Bax, all, like myself, *bourgeois* crossed with squirearchy—that painted the flag red. Bakunin and Kropotkin, of the military and noble caste (like Napoleon), were our extreme left. The middle and upper classes are the revolutionary element in society; the proletariat is the conservative element, as Disraeli well knew." *

Some such Marxist passion, one surmises, subsequently carried weight with Shaw in influencing his choice of the Fabian Society as the fit *milieu* for the development and exploitation of his energy and talent. For at heart Shaw is what his plays so abundantly prove him—the revolted *bourgeois*.

Not only did Marx's jeremiad against the *bourgeoisie* awaken instant response in Shaw: it changed the whole tenor of his life. No single book—not the Bible of orthodoxy and respectability, certainly—has influenced Shaw so much as the "bible of the working classes." It made him a Socialist. Although he has since repudiated some of the fundamental economic theories of Marx, at this time he found in *Das Kapital* the concrete expression of all those social convictions, grievances and wrongs which seethed in the crater of his being. He became that most determined, most resolute, and often most dangerous of men to deal with, a man with a mission. "From that hour," I once heard Mr. Shaw say, "I became a man with some business in the world."

During the years 1883 and 1884 Shaw threw himself heart and soul into the exciting task of Socialist agitation and propaganda. His dogged practice in public speaking now began to demonstrate its value with telling effect. While he spent his days in criticizing books in the *Pall Mall Gazette* and pictures in the *World*, he devoted his evenings to consistent and strenuous Socialist propagandism. He accepted invitations to address all

sorts of bodies on every day in the week, Sunday not excepted. Remember his confession that he first caught the ear of the British public on a cart in Hyde Park, to the blaring of brass bands. During these years, also, he was coming into close touch with the younger generation destined soon to unite in a solid phalanx as the Fabian Society. Probably no living man has touched modern life at so many points as has Bernard Shaw. In his lifetime he has traversed a very lengthy arc on the circle of modern culture, modern thought and modern philosophy. Sovereign contempt for the laggard is one of his prominent characteristics; he himself has ever been an "outpost thinker" on the firing line of modern intellectual conflict. Essentially significant because essentially modern, Shaw owes no small share of his ability, his versatility, and his breadth of interests to his voraciously acquisitive, acutely inquisitive intellect. Clever acquaintances, brimming with ideas, and overflowing with combative zeal, furnished grist for the ceaselessly active mill of Shaw's intelligence. No biography which failed to trace the shaping influence exerted upon Shaw's frantically complex career by such men as Hubert Bland, Graham Wallas, Sidney Olivier, Sidney Webb and William Morris, could lay just claim to the title of genuine natural history.

At the Land Reform Union Shaw first met Sidney Olivier, then upper division clerk in the Colonial Office. Sidney Webb and Sidney Olivier, very close friends, were the two resident clerks there. When Webb, at Shaw's persuasion, joined the Fabians, Olivier went with him. There existed a very close relation, not only between the various members of the Fabian Society, but also between many of the advanced societies which came to life at this time. For example, Sidney Olivier, who was secretary of the Fabian Society for several years, and Edward Carpenter's brother, Captain Alfred Carpenter, of the Royal Navy, married sisters; in this way there was a sort of family connection between the Socialist and Humanitarian movements. Olivier had made friends at Oxford with Graham Wallas, who was probably influenced through this connection to become a Fabian. The very intimate relation existing between Shaw, Webb, Olivier and Wallas, and the consequent marked influence

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upon Shaw's literary career and performance, will be spoken of elsewhere at greater length. It is noteworthy that all of these men possessed literary talents of no mean order. Webb's books have a world-wide reputation. Olivier's play, *Mrs. Marzwell's Marriage*, has been performed by the London Stage Society; and his literary talent has displayed itself, not only in plays, but also in verse, essay and story.* In addition to his ability as a facile public speaker, Graham Wallas also possessed literary talent of no mean order, displayed to best advantage in his book on *Francis Place*, with its lucid exposition of the way in which politics are "wire pulled" in England by real reformers.†

Another man of talent, whose very opposition of belief and view-point exerted a sort of stimulating influence upon Shaw, was William Clarke, an Oxford M.A., who contributed the chapter on *The Industrial Basis of Socialism* to *Fabian Essays*. A Whitmanite, with strong feelings of rationalist type, allied in spirit to Martineau, the Unitarians, and their logical outgrowth, the American Ethical Society, Clarke made upon Shaw an ineffaceable impression. Shaw first met this remarkable man at the Bedford Society—a meeting which bore fruit in Clarke's joining the Fabian Society. Clarke had lectured in America, known Whitman, and is remembered as the author of several books. Although a successful lecturer, he had by this time exhausted the interest of lecturing, being much older than the other Fabians. A very unlucky man, he was, in consequence, very poor. It has been often said that in the matter of philanthropy Shaw never let his right hand know what his left was doing; he found a way to relieve Clarke's poverty without even letting Clarke, who quarrelled with everything and everybody, suspect that he was the recipient of benefaction. When the *Daily Chronicle* changed its policy and decided to give a column

* Entering the Colonial Office twenty-five years ago, he served as Colonial Secretary of the Island of Jamaica from 1899 to 1904, and on three occasions served as Acting Governor. From 1903 to 1907 he was principal clerk in the West African Department; in April, 1907, he was appointed

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in its pages to Labour, its concerns and interests, the editor, in his search for young blood, hit upon Shaw, who quietly substituted Clarke in his place. Had Clarke ever discovered the truth it might have mitigated the profound moral horror of Shaw he always entertained. How Shaw must have chuckled over the latent comedy! The secret philanthropist regarded as a moral anarchist, a *monstrum horrendum*, by his highly moral beneficiary! To Clarke, an altruist and moralist to the backbone, the dawning of Ibsenism, of Nietzscheism, of Shavvianism, seemed to be the coming of chaos. "Yet the fact that I knew his value and insisted on it, and that I could sympathize even with his horror of me," Mr. Shaw once told me, "kept our personal relations remorselessly cordial. The last time I called on him was in the influenza period. He was working madly, as usual. He would have certainly refused to see anyone; but he was alone in the flat, and opened the door for me. With a savage, set face that would have made even Ibsen's mouth look soft by contrast, he said, through his shut teeth: 'I can give you five minutes and that is all.' 'My dear Clarke,' I replied, ambling idly into his study, 'I must leave in half an hour to keep an appointment, and I have just been thinking how I am to get away from you so soon, for I know you won't let me go.' And it turned out exactly as I said. We began to discuss the Parnell divorce case and the Irish crisis, and I could not get away from him until the hour was nearly doubled." *

The part which the Fabian Society has played in English life, and the share of Bernard Shaw in the task of advancing the principles of Collectivism in the last twenty odd years, alone offer ample material for a book. So diverse in its ramifications is the subject, that it will be possible here to trace the evolu-

* Particularly sad are the subsequent details of Clarke's life. After saving about a thousand pounds by frantically working away for several years as a journalist, he lost it all again in an unfortunate investment in the Liberator Building Society the enterprise of the notorious James Halloway on an assured reputation as a journalist and author, Clarke might have repaired his fortunes. But the first great influenza epidemic almost killed him; and each year thereafter the epidemic laid upon him its increasingly tenacious grip. At last he sought to regain his health by foreign travel, only to die in Hercegovina. Clarke was the first leading Fabian to fall.

tionary advance of Socialism in England only in so far directly bears upon Shaw's career.* As we know, Shaw had his real education as a pupil of Mill, Comte, Darwin and Spencer. Converted to Socialism by Henry George's *Progress and Poverty*, Shaw took to insurrectionary Socialism after reading *Das Kapital*. Marx's book won his approval because it so fiercely "condemned private property of land, spoliation, murder and compulsory prostitution; of pestilence and famine; battle, murder and sudden death." Some time before joining any Socialist society, Shaw joined Socialism with the utmost zeal and enthusiasm. There was a society lay between the Social Democratic Federation and the Socialist League—both quite proletarian in their rank, both aiming at being large working-class organizations. The Fabian Society, which was middle class through and through. "When I myself, on the point of joining the Democratic Federation, changed my mind and joined the Fabian instead," Shaw once wrote, "I was guided by no coverable difference in programme or principle, but by an instinctive feeling that the Fabian, and not the insurrectionary, would attract the men of my own bias and mental habits, who were then ripening for the work that lay before us."

The meetings held at Thomas Davidson's rooms at 11, 1881-1883 furnished the initial impulse to the ethical Socialism in England of the last thirty years. As an immediate result of these meetings the Fabian Society sprang into being. In September, 1882, Thomas Davidson, recently returned from Italy, where he had been engaged in writing an interpretation of the ethical philosophy of Rosmini, gathered about him a group of people "interested in religious thought, social propaganda, and social reform." Among their number were Messrs. Frank Podmore, Edward R. Pease, Havelock Ellis, Percival Chubb, Dr. Burns Gibson, H. H. Champion, William Clarke, Hubert Bland, the Rev. G. W. Allen and

* In this connection, compare *Socialism in England*, by Hilda D. G. Swan, Sonnenschein and Co., 1890.

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17, OXFORD STREET, REGENT'S PARK.

FABIAN TRACTS, No. 2.

A Manifesto.

"For always in thine eyes, O Liberty!
Shines that high light whereby the world is saved
And, though thou slay us, we will trust in thee."

LONDON:
GEO. STANDRING, 8 & 9, FINSBURY STREET, E.C.

1884

FACSIMILE OF COVER OF FABIAN TRACT, No. 2.

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Jupp, Miss Caroline Hadden, Miss Dale Owen and Mrs. Hinton. According to Mr. Havelock Ellis, Davidson was convinced of "the absolute necessity of founding practical life on philosophical conceptions; of living a simple, strenuous, intellectual life, so far as possible communistically, and on a basis of natural religion. It was Rosminianism, one may say, carried a step further." The many meetings at Mr. Pense's rooms in Osna-burgh Street and elsewhere finally bore fruit in a series of resolutions proposed by Dr. Burns Gibson.* Certain members of the circle, led by Mr. Polmore, who desired to have a society on more general lines, purposed organizing a second society, not necessarily exclusive of the "Fellowship," on broader and more indeterminate lines, leaving it open to anyone to belong to both societies. At a meeting on January 4th, 1884, these proposals were substantially agreed to. The original name, "The Fellowship of the New Life," was retained by those who originally devised it, and a new organization constituted under the title of "The Fabian Society."†

The Fabian Society, as Shaw has told us in characteristic style, was "warlike in its origin; it came into existence through a schism in an earlier society for the peaceful regeneration of the race by the cultivation of perfection of individual character. Certain members of that circle, modestly feeling that the revolution would have to wait an unreasonably long time if postponed until they personally had attained perfection, set up the banner of Socialism militant, seceded from the regenerators, and established themselves independently as the Fabian

*The society was entitled "The Fellowship of the New Life," and its first manifesto was entitled *Vita Nuova*. The following was its original basis, as drawn up by Mr. Maurice Adams, and adopted on November 16th, 1883:

"We, recognizing the evils and wrongs that must beset men so long as our social life is based upon selfishness, rivalry and ignorance, and desiring above all things to supplant it by a life based upon unselfishness, love and wisdom, unite, for the purpose of realizing the higher life among ourselves, and of inducing and enabling others to do the same.

"And we now form ourselves into a Society, to be called the Guild of the New Life, to carry out this purpose."

† Compare *Memorials of Thomas Davidson, the Wandering Scholar*, collected and edited by William Knight. T. Fisher Unwin, London, 1907.

Society." Shaw was not one of the original Fabians; in fact, he knew nothing of the society until its first tract, *Why are the Many Poor?* fell into his hands. For some reason the name of the society struck him as an inspiration. His choice fell upon that society in which he could gratify his desire to work with a few educated and clever men of the type of Sidney Webb.

In the earliest stage of the society the Fabians were content with nothing less than the prompt "reconstruction of society in accordance with the highest moral possibilities." Shaw joined the society on September 5th, 1884, when it was about eight months old, and in the labour notes *versus* pass-books stage of evolution. Shaw actually debated with a Fabian who had elaborated a pass book system, the question whether money should be permitted under Socialism, or whether labour-notes would not be a more suitable currency! The next two tracts, numbered 2 and 3, were from Shaw's pen; and although they were, as he now rightly regards them, mere literary *boutades*, they serve as an important link in the history of the evolution of the society.* Tract No. 4, *What Socialism Is*, answering the

*Tract No. 2, dated 1884, which is now very rare, has for motto the words of the late John Hay:

"For always in thine eyes, O Liberty!
Shines that high light whereby the world is saved;
And, though thou slay us, we will trust in thee."

Certain sections of this manifesto deserve quotation as illustrative of Shaw's original and characteristic mode of expression:

"That, under existing circumstances, wealth cannot be enjoyed without dishonour, or forgone without misery.

"That the most striking result of our present system of farming out the national land and capital to private individuals has been the division of society into hostile classes, with large appetites and no dinners at one extreme, and large dinners and no appetites at the other.

"That the State should compete with private individuals especially with parents in providing happy homes for children, so that every child may have a refuge from the tyranny or neglect of natural custodians.

"That men no longer need special political privileges to protect them against women; and that the sexes should henceforth enjoy equal political rights.

"That the established Government has no more right to call itself the State than the smoke of London has to call itself the weather.

question both from the Collectivist and Anarchist point of view, reveals the early Anarchistic leanings of the society; the tract really contained nothing that had not already been better stated in the famous Communist Manifesto of Marx and Engels. Shaw was especially impressed by the fact that, in *Das Kapital*, Marx had made the most extensive use of the documents containing the true history of the leaps and bounds of England's prosperity, e.g., the Blue Books. This convinced him that a tract stuffed with facts and figures, with careful references to official sources, was what was wanted. Incapable of making such tracts unaided, Shaw at once bethought him of Sidney Webb. That "walking encyclopædia," the student who knew everything and forgot nothing, could do it, Shaw was aware, as well as it could be done. So he brought all his powers of persuasion to bear on Sidney Webb. Picture to yourself the scene—two earnest, enthusiastic, revolutionary young men walking up and down Whitehall, outside the Colonial Office door, holding long and weighty discussions, often prolonged into the wee small hours, concerning the future of Socialism—the keen wit and agile logic of Shaw pitted against the sound judgment and sane conservatism of Webb. In this crucial juncture Shaw's proved the heavier artillery, and Webb became a Fabian. It would be difficult to lay one's finger upon any circumstance of deeper, more permanent, or more salutary effect upon Shaw's whole life. When Sidney Webb joined the Fabian Society there began a new and profoundly significant chapter in the history of Bernard Shaw. The debt Shaw owes to Webb is incalculable, and no one is readier to affirm it than Shaw himself. On various occasions I have heard Mr. Shaw unstintingly ascribe to Mr. Webb the greatest measure of credit for formulating and direct-

"That we had rather face a civil war than such another century of suffering as the present one has been."

Tract No. 3, addressed "To Provident Landlords and Capitalists," urged the proprietary classes to support "all undertakings having for their object the parcelling out of waste or inferior lands among the labouring class, and the attachment to the soil of a numerous body of peasant proprietors." Among the probable results of such a reform was mentioned (section 3): "The peasant proprietor, having a stock in the country, will, unlike the landless labourer of to-day, have a common interest with the landlord in resisting revolutionary proposals."

ing the policy of the Fabian Society for many years. "The truth of the matter," Mr. Shaw once said to me, "is that Webb and I are very useful to each other. We are in perfect contrast, each supplying the deficiency in the other." On the other hand, Mr. Webb assigns the chief credit to Mr. Shaw; and in a personal letter, as well as in conversation, he has assured me that Mr. Shaw has been not simply *a* leading member, but *the* leading member of the Fabian Society practically from its foundation, and that it has always expressed his political views and work. I think we may safely say that Mr. Shaw and Mr. Webb have been mutually complementary—and complimentary.

The immediate result of the acquisition of Webb, the new recruit of the Fabians, was Tract No. 5, *Facts for Socialists*, a tangible proof of Webb's richly-stored mind and well-nourished scholarship. A comparison of this tract with those numbered 2 and 3 is sufficient evidence of the vast practical improvement Webb effected in the publications of the society. From this time forth the tracts and manifestos of the Fabian Society took on character and importance through the fortunate conjunction of Webb's encyclopædic mind and Shaw's literary sense. The next publication of importance was Tract No. 7, *Capital and Land*, a survey of the distribution of property among the classes in England. Drafted by Sidney Olivier, this tract was aimed in reality at the Georgites, who regarded capital as sacred. It exhibits growth of independent thought on the part of the society, and courage in breaking away from the fetters of "mere Henry Georgism."

Eight years later, that official organ of the Gladstonians, the *Speaker*, defined Fabianism as a "mixture of dreary, gassy doctrinairism and crack-brained farcicality, set off by a portentous omniscience and a flighty egotism not to be matched outside the walls of a lunatic asylum." Such denunciatory invective reveals the activity and influence the Fabian Society must have exerted, during those years, in the direction most dreaded by the older Whigs. But many were the lessons learned, the hard knocks received, the follies rejected, before Fabianism was sufficiently dangerous and important to be honoured with the scathing denunciation of the *Speaker*. The Fabian wisdom grew

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out of the Fabian experience; scientific economics out of insurrectionary anarchism. Decidedly catastrophic in their views at first, the Fabians were not unlike the young Socialist Shaw somewhere describes, who plans the revolutionary programme as an affair of twenty-four lively hours, with Individualism in full swing on Monday morning, a tidal wave of the insurgent proletariat on Monday afternoon, and Socialism in complete working order on Tuesday. After Mrs. Wilson, subsequently one of the Freedom Group of Kropotkinist Anarchists, joined the Fabians, a sort of influenza of Anarchism spread through the society.* In regard to political insurrectionism, the Fabians exhibited no definite and explicit disagreement with the Social Democratic Federation, avowedly founded on recognition of the existence of a class war. All, Fabians and Social Democrats alike, said freely that "as gunpowder destroyed the feudal system, so the capitalist system could not long survive the invention of dynamite"! Not that they were dynamitards; but, as Shaw explains: "We thought that the statement about gunpowder and feudalism was historically true, and that it would do the capitalists good to remind them of it." The saner spirits did not believe the revolution could be accomplished merely by singing the *Marseillaise*; but some of the youthful and insurgent enthusiasts "were so convinced that Socialism had only to be put clearly before the working classes to concentrate the power of their immense numbers into one irresistible organization, that the revolution was fixed for 1889—the anniversary of the French Revolution—at latest." Shaw was certainly not one of the conservative forces; he was outspokenly catastrophic and alarmingly ignorant of the multifarious delicate adjustments consequent upon a widespread social cataclysm. "I remember being asked satirically and publicly at that time," Shaw afterwards wrote, "how long it would take to get Socialism into working order if I had my way. I replied with a spirited modesty, that a fortnight would be ample for the purpose. When I add that I was frequently complimented on being one of the more reasonable Socialists, you will be able

* Compare Fabian Tract No. 41.

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to appreciate the fervour of our conviction and the extravagant levity of our practical ideas." *

Broadly stated, the Fabians, in 1885, proceeded upon the assumption that their projects were immediately possible and realizable, an assumption theoretically as well as practically unsound. At the Industrial Remunerative Conference they denounced the capitalists as thieves; while among themselves they were vehemently debating the questions of revolution, anarchism, labour-notes *versus* pass-books, and other like futile and daring projects. The tacit assumption under which they worked, the purpose of their campaign with its watchwords: "Educate, Agitate, Organize," was "to bring about a tremendous smash-up of existing society, to be succeeded by complete Socialism." This romantic, almost childlike faith in the early consummation of that far-off divine event, towards which the whole of Socialist creation moves, meant nothing more nor less, as Shaw freely admits, than that they had no true practical understanding either of existing society or Socialism. But the tone of the society was changing, gradually and almost imperceptibly, from that of insurrectionary futility to economic practicality. Their tracts and manifestos voiced, less and less frequently, forcible-feeble expressions of altruistic concern and humanitarian indignation. The practical bases of Socialism, the Fabians began to realize, were in sore need of being laid. And there can be no doubt that the frank levity and irreverent outspokenness, which are the distinguishing traits of Shaw, the artist, were given the fullest field for development in the early days of Fabian controversy, when no rein was put on tongue or imagination. It was at this period, Shaw has told us, that the Fabians contracted the invaluable habit of freely laughing at themselves—a habit which has always distinguished them, always saved them from being dampened by the gushing enthusiasts who mistake their own emotions for public movements. As Shaw once expressed it:

* *The Transition to Social Democracy*, an address delivered on September 7th, 1888, to the Economic Section of the British Association at Bath. Printed in *Fabian Essays*, but first published in *Our Corner*, November, 1888, edited by Annie Besant.

"From the first such people fled after one glance at us, declaring that we were not serious. Our preferences for practical suggestions and criticisms, and our impatience of all general expressions of sympathy with working-class aspirations, not to mention our way of chiding our opponents in preference to denouncing them as enemies of the human race, repelled from us some warm hearted and eloquent Socialists, to whom it seemed callous and cynical to be even commonly self-possessed in the presence of the sufferings upon which Socialists make war. But there was far too much equality and personal intimacy among the Fabians to allow of any member presuming to get up and preach at the rest in the fashion which the working-class still tolerate submissively from their leaders. We knew that a certain sort of oratory was useful for 'stoking up' public meetings; but we needed no stoking up, and when any orator tried the process on us, soon made him understand that he was wasting his time and ours. I, for one, should be very sorry to lower the intellectual standard of the Fabian by making the atmosphere of its public discussions the least bit more congenial to stale declamation than it is at present. If our debates are to be kept wholesome, they cannot be too irreverent or too critical. And the irreverence, which has become traditional with us, comes down from those early days when we often talked such nonsense that we could not help laughing at ourselves." *

No perceptible difference in the various Socialist societies in England was apparent until the election of 1885. When the Social Democratic Federation and that high priest of Marxism, the eloquent H. M. Hyndman, first appeared in the field, they "loomed hideously in the guilty eye of property." Whilst the Fabians numbered only forty, the Federation in numbers and influence was magnified out of all proportion by the imagination of the public and the political parties. The Tories actually believed that the Socialists could take enough votes from the

* Tract No. 41, *The Fabian Society: Its Early History*, by G. Bernard Shaw.

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Liberals to make it worth their while to pay the expenses of two Socialist candidates in London.* The Social Democrats committed a huge tactical blunder in accepting Tory gold to pay the expenses of these elections, to say nothing of making the damaging exposure that, as far as voting power was concerned, the Socialists might be regarded as an absolutely negligible quantity. A more serious result of the "Tory money job" to the Federation was the defection of many of its adherents. The Socialist League, in the language of American National Conventions, viewed with indignation and repudiated with scorn the tactics of "that disreputable gang," the S. D. F., as it was currently designated; while the Fabians, more parliamentary in tone, passed the following resolution: "That the conduct of the Council of the Social Democratic Federation in accepting money from the Tory party in payment of the election expenses of Socialist candidates is calculated to disgrace the Socialist movement in England." Certain members of the Federation, under the leadership of C. L. Fitzgerald and J. MacDonald, seceded from it, and in February, 1886, formed a new body called "The Socialist Union," which eked out a precarious existence for barely two years. Far from being reinforced by the secessionists, the Fabians were, on the contrary, only the more inevitably forced to formulate their own principles, to mature their own individual policy. From this time forward, they were classed by the Federation as a hostile body. And, as Shaw says, "We ourselves knew that we should have to find a way for ourselves without looking to the other bodies for a trustworthy lead."

During the years 1886 and 1887, which mark the high tide and recession of Insurrectionism in recent English Socialist history, the same tacticians, the Fabians, took little or no hand in the revolutionary projects for the relief of the unemployed. The budding economists were not wedded to street-corner agita-

* The main facts of the history of the Fabian Society as here recorded are derived chiefly from Fabian Tract, No. 41, *The Fabian Society: Its Early History*, by Mr. Shaw, and from conversations with Mr. Shaw. Compare, also, *The Fabian Society*, by William Clarke; Preface to *Fabian Essays*. Ball Publishing Co., Boston, 1908.

tions; nor was their help wanted by the men who were organizing church parades and the like. These were years of great distress among the labouring classes, not only in England, but in Holland, in Belgium, and especially in the United States. "These were the days when Mr. Champion told a meeting in London Fields that if the whole propertied class had but one throat he would cut it without a second thought if by doing so he could redress the injustices of our social system; and when Mr. Hyndman was expelled from his club for declaring on the Thames Embankment that there would be some attention paid to cases of starvation if a rich man were immolated on every pauper's tomb." After the 8th of February, 1886, that mad Monday of window-breaking, shop-looting, and carriage-storming memory, Hyndman, Champion, Burns, and Williams were arrested and tried for inspiring the agitation, but were acquitted. "The agitation went on more violently than ever afterwards; and the restless activity of Champion, seconded by Burns' formidable oratory, seized on every public opportunity, from the Lord Mayor's Show to services for the poor in Westminster Abbey or St. Paul's, to parade the unemployed and force their claims upon the attention of the public." Champion gave up in disgust when, impatient of doing nothing but marching hungry men about the streets and making speeches to them, he encountered only refusal of his two proposals to the Federation: either to empower him to negotiate some scheme of relief with his aristocratic sympathizers, or else go to Trafalgar Square and stay there until something should happen. Matters reached a crisis when the police, alarmed by the occasional proposals of incendiary agitation to set London on fire simultaneously at the Bank, St. Paul's, the House of Commons, the Stock Exchange, and the Tower, cleared the unemployed out of the Square. But the agitation for right of meeting grew universal among the working-classes; and finally Mr. Stend, with the whole working-class organization at his back, gave the word "To the Square!" * To the Square they all went, therefore,

* For an interesting account of the early movements of Socialistic consciousness in England, compare *An Artist's Reminiscences*, by the artist, Walter Crane; Chapter "Art and Socialism," pp. 249-338. Methuen and Co., 1907.

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Shaw tells us, with drums beating and banners waving, in their tens of thousands, nominally to protest against the Irish policy of the Government, but really to maintain the right of meeting in the Square. With the new Chief Commissioner of Police, however, it was, as one of Bunyan's Pilgrims put it, but a word and a blow. "That eventful 13th of November, 1887, has since been known as 'Bloody Sunday.' The heroes of it were Burns and Cunningham Graham, who charged, two strong, at the rampart of policemen round the Square and were overpowered and arrested. The heroine was Mrs. Besant, who may be said without the slightest exaggeration to have all but killed herself with overwork in looking after the prisoners, and organizing in their behalf a 'Law and Liberty League' with Mr. Stead. Meanwhile, the police received the blessing of Mr. Gladstone; and Insurrectionism, after a two years' innings, vanished from the field and has not since been heard of. For, in the middle of the revengeful growling over the defeat at the Square, trade revived; the unemployed were absorbed; the *Star* newspaper appeared to let in light and let off steam; in short, the way was clear at last for Fabianism. Do not forget, though, that Insurrectionism will reappear at the next depression in trade as surely as the sun will rise to-morrow morning." *

Being "disgracefully backward" in open-air speaking, the Fabians had been somewhat overlooked in the excitements of the unemployed agitations. They had only Shaw, Wallas and Mrs. Besant as against Burns, Hyndman, Andrew Hall, Tom Mann, Champion and Burrows, of the Federation, and numerous representative open-air speakers of the Socialist League. The sole contribution of the Fabians to the agitation was a report, printed in 1886, recommending experiments in tobacco culture, and even hinting at compulsory military service as a means of

* Shaw's mother was never able to persuade herself, so strong were her aristocratic instincts, that in becoming a Socialist, George had not allied himself with a band of ragamuffins. One day, while walking down Regent Street with her son, she inquired who was the handsome gentleman on the opposite side. On being told that it was Cunningham Graham, the distinguished Socialist, she protested: "No, no, George, that's impossible. Why, that man's a gentleman!"

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absorbing some of the unskilled unemployed. Drawn up by Bland, Hughes, Podmore, Stapleton and Webb, this was the first Fabian publication that contained any solid information. In June, 1886, the temper of the society over the social question having cooled to some extent, the Fabians "signalized their repudiation of Sectarianism" by inviting the Radicals, the Secularists, and anyone else who would come, to a great conference, modelled upon the Industrial Remunerative Conference, and dealing with the Nationalization of Land and Capital. Fifty-three societies sent delegates, and eighteen papers were read during the three afternoons and evenings the conference lasted. Among those who read papers were two Members of Parliament, William Morris and Dr. Aveling, of the Socialist League, Mr. Foote and Mr. Robertson, of the National Secular Society, Wordsworth Donisthorpe, Stuart Headlam, Dr. Pankhurst, Mrs. Besant, Edward Carpenter and Stuart-Glennie represented various other shades of Socialist doctrine and belief. The main result of the conference was to make the Fabians known to the Radical clubs and to prove that they were able to manage a conference in a business-like way.

By this time the Fabians had definitely rejected Anarchism, and were agreed as to the advisability of setting to work by the ordinary political methods. The revolutionary hue of the society, however, was not obliterated without many wordy duels with that section of the Socialist League which called itself Anti-Communist, chiefly represented by Mr. Joseph Lane and William Morris.* It finally became necessary to put the matter to a vote in order to determine how many adherents Mrs. Wilson, the one avowed Anarchist among the Fabians, could muster. There ensued a spirited debate over the advisability of the Socialists organizing themselves as a political party "for the purpose of transferring into the hands of the whole working community full control over the soil and the means of production, as well as over the production and distribution of wealth" — a debate in which Morris, Mrs. Wilson, Davis and Tochatti were pitted against Burns, Mrs. Besant, Bland, Shaw, Donald

* Compare *To-Day*, edited by Hubert Bland, for the year 1886.

nd Rossiter. The resolution of Mrs. Besant and Bland, in
favour of the organization of such a party, was finally carried,
while Morris's "rider," discountenancing as a false step the
attempt of the Socialists to take part in the Parliamentary con-
test, was subsequently rejected. The Fabian Parliamentary
League, an organization within the society itself, to which any
Fabian might belong, was now formed in order to avoid a break
with the Fabians who sympathized with Mrs. Wilson. The pre-
liminary manifesto of this body, dated February, 1887, gives
the first sketch of the Fabian policy of to-day.* The League,
Shaw tells us, first faded into a Political Committee of the
society, and then merged silently and painlessly into the general
body. The few branches of the League which Mrs. Besant
formed in the provinces had but a short life, quite to be ex-
pected at this time, for, outside Socialistic circles in London,
the society remained unknown.

In connection with Shaw's own individual development, we
shall soon see how the Fabians received their training for public
life and became "equipped with all the culture of the age."
It suffices it to state here that the Fabians had now thoroughly
rounded themselves in the historic, economic and moral bearings
of Socialism. Their rejection of Anarchism and Insurrection-
ism was not accomplished without the expenditure of many
words, was not unattended by ludicrous results. The minutes
of the tumultuous meeting, signalized by the Besant-Bland-
Morris resolutions and attendant heated debate, closed with the
significant words:

"Subsequently to the meeting, the secretary received
notice from the manager of Auderton's Hotel that the
Society could not be accommodated there for any further
meetings."

At any rate, even at the cost of being refused a meeting-
place, the Fabians had finally demolished Anarchism in the
abstract "by grinding it between human nature and the theory

* This manifesto, in full, is to be found in Fabian Tract No. 41, pp. 13-14.

of economic rent." They now began to train the artillery of their culture and economic equipment upon practical politics. The Fabian Conference of 1886, attesting the repudiation of sectarianism by the Fabians, had been boycotted by the S. D. F. In 1888, the Fabians adopted a policy which severed the last link between the Fabian Society and the Federation. The Fabians began to join the Liberal and Radical, or even the Conservative, Associations, to become members of the nearest Radical Club and Co-operative Store, and, whenever possible, to be delegated to the Metropolitan Radical Federation and the Liberal and Radical Union. By making speeches and moving resolutions at the meetings of these bodies, and using the Parliamentary candidate for the constituency as a catspaw, the Fabians succeeded in "permeating" the party organizations. So adroitly did the Fabians manage their machinery of political wire-pulling that in 1888 they gained the solid advantage of a Progressive majority full of ideas "that would never have come into their heads had not the Fabians put them there," on the first London County Council. In Shaw's words, in 1892:

"The generalship of this movement was undertaken chiefly by Sidney Webb, who played such bewildering conjuring tricks with the Liberal thimbles and the Fabian peas, that to this day both the Liberals and the Sectarian Socialists stand aghast at him. It was exciting whilst it lasted, all this 'permeation of the Liberal party,' as it was called; and no person with the smallest political intelligence is likely to deny that it made a foothold for us in the press and pushed forward Socialism in municipal politics to an extent which can only be appreciated by those who remember how things stood before our campaign. When we published 'Fabian Essays' at the end of 1889, having ventured with great misgiving on a subscription edition of a thousand, it went off like smoke; and our cheap edition brought up the circulation to about twenty thousand. In the meantime, we had been cramming the public with information in tracts, on the model of our earliest financial success in that department, namely, *Facts*



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Black & white photograph taken on July 1901

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for Socialists, the first edition of which actually brought us a profit—the only instance of the kind then known. In short, the years 1888, 1889, 1890 saw a Fabian boom. . . .”*

In the *Political Outlook*, last of the *Fabian Essays*, Hubert Bland wisely predicted that the moment the party leaders had unmasked the Fabian designs, they would rally round all the institutions the Fabians were attacking. They might either put off the Fabians by raising false issues, such as Leaseholds, Enfranchisement and Disestablishment of the Church, or, in order to defeat the Fabian candidates, confederate with their rivals or office—just as, for example, the Republicans and Democrats united in the defeat of Henry George for mayor of New York City. In less than two years, Bland's prediction was verified. When Sidney Webb sought to force to political action a certain “Liberal and Radical” London Member of Parliament, who had unwarily expressed views virtually identical with Socialism, the startled politician discovered that he was not a Socialist and that Webb was. Although the word to “close up the ranks of Capitalism against the insidious invaders” was promptly given, it came too late, for the permeation had gone on too long. But the result was the “show down” of the Fabian hand, and the call for a “new deal.” In fact, the Conference of the London and Provincial Fabian Societies at Essex Hall on February 6th, 1892, was called together, not to celebrate the continuance of the permeation boom, but to face the fact that it was over. The time had come for a new departure. In his address before that conference, Shaw unhesitatingly said: “No doubt there still remains, in London, as everywhere else, a vast mass of political raw material, calling itself Liberal, Radical, Tory, Labour, and what not, or even not calling itself anything at all, which is ready to take the Fabian stamp if it is adroitly and politely pressed down on it. There are thousands of thoroughly Socialized Radicals to-day who would have resisted So-

* Tract No. 41: *The Fabian Society: Its Early History*, by G. Bernard Shaw.

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cialism fiercely if it had been forced on them with taunts, threats, and demands that they should recant all their old professions and commit what they regard as an act of political apostasy. And there are thousands more, not yet Socialized, who must be dealt with in the same manner. But whilst our propaganda is thus still chiefly a matter of permeation, that game is played out in our politics. . . . We now feel that we have brought up all the political laggards and pushed their parties as far as they can be pushed, and that we have therefore cleared the way to the beginning of the special political work of the Socialist—that of forming a Collectivist party of those who have more to gain than to lose by Collectivism, solidly arrayed against those who have more to lose than to gain by it.” And his final words project no absurdly Utopian dream of striking the shackles from the white slaves of Capital. While expressing undiminished hope for the possibilities of a distant, yet realizable, future, they reveal the sanity of the practical man of affairs, of the realist Shaw has so often magnified and celebrated. “You know what we have gone through, and what you will probably have to go through. You know why we believe that the middle-classes will have their share in bringing about Socialism, and why we do not hold aloof from Radicalism, Trade-Unionism, or any of the movements which are traditionally individualistic. You know, too, that none of you can more ardently desire the formation of a genuine Collectivist political party, distinct from Conservative and Liberal alike, than we do. But I hope you also know that there is not the slightest use in merely expressing your aspirations unless you can give us some voting power to back them and that your business in the provinces is, in one phrase, to create that voting power. Whilst our backers at the polls are counted by tens, we must continue to crawl and drudge and lecture as best we can. When they are counted by hundreds we can permeate and trim and compromise. When they rise to tens of thousands we shall take the field as an independent party. Give us hundreds of thou-

THE CART AND TRUMPET

"I leave the delicacies of retirement to those who are gentlemen first and literary workmen afterwards. The cart and trumpet for me."—*On Diabolonian Ethics. In Three Plays for Puritans*, p. xxi.

CHAPTER V

IF the art of living were only the art of dialectic! If this world were a world of pure intellect, Mr. Shaw would be a dramatist." Mr. Walkley dares the dramatist to deify the dialectician. Many would deny Shaw the possession of a heart; few can deny him the possession of a remarkable brain and a phenomenal faculty of telling speech. The platform orator of to-day—easy, nonchalant, resourceful, instantaneous in repartee, unmatched in *hardiess*, sublime in audacity—Shaw was once a trembling, shrinking novice. The veteran of a thousand verbal combats was once afraid to raise his voice; the *blagueur*, the "quacksalver" of a thousand mystifications, was once afraid to open his mouth! After all, the "brilliant" and "extraordinary" Shaw is only a self-made man. The sheer force of his will, exerted with tremendous energy ever since he came to man's estate, is the great motor which has carried him in his lifetime "from the seventeenth to the twenty-first century." A scientific natural history of Bernard Shaw's extraordinary career should make clear to all young aspirants that the extraordinariness of that career lies in its ordinariness. "Like a green-grocer and unlike a minor poet," as Mr. Shaw once put it to me, "I have lived instead of dreaming and feeding myself with artistic confectionery. With a little more courage and a little more energy I could have done much more; and I lacked these because in my boyhood I lived on my imagination instead of on my work."

Bernard Shaw has unravelled life's tangles with infinite patience. No cutting of Gordian knots for him. To ignore his training, his dogged persistence, his undaunted "push, pluck and perseverance," is unduly to magnify his natural capacity. Sacrifice the phenomenon and you find the personality, off with the marvel and on with the man. In a letter to me, written in 1904, Mr. Shaw gave due, almost undue, credit to the influence of training:

"It has enabled me to produce an impression of being an extraordinarily clever, original and brilliant writer, deficient only in feeling, whereas the truth is that, though I am in a way a man of genius--otherwise I suppose I could not have sought out and enjoyed my experiences and been simply bored by holidays, luxury and money--yet I am not in the least naturally 'brilliant,' and not at all ready or clever. If literary men generally were put through the mill I went through and kept out of their stuffy little coteries, where works of art breed in and in until the intellectual and spiritual product becomes hopelessly degenerate, I should have a thousand rivals more brilliant than myself. There is nothing more mischievous than the notion that my works are the mere play of a delightfully clever and whimsical hero of the salons: they are the result of perfectly straightforward drudgery, beginning in the inepetest novel-writing juvenility, and persevered in every day for twenty-five years."

The combination of supreme audacity with a sort of expansive and ludicrous self-consciousness has enabled Shaw to secure many of his most comic effects. And yet he once said with unreasonable modesty that anybody could get his skill for the same price, and that a good many people could probably get it cheaper. He wrested his self-consciousness to his own ends, transforming it from a serious defect into a virtue of genuine comic force. The apocryphal incident of Demosthenes and the pebbles finds its analogue in the case of Shaw. Only the most persistent and long-continued efforts enabled him to acquire that sublime hardihood in platform speaking which he deprecatingly denominates "ordinary self-possession." When Lecky, in 1879, first dragged him to a meeting of the Zetetical Society, Shaw knew absolutely nothing about public meetings or public order. I remember a talk with Mr. Shaw one day at Ayot St. Lawrence over the morning meal. "I had an air of impudence, of course," said Mr. Shaw, "but was really an arrant coward, nervous and self-conscious to a heartrending degree. Yet I could not hold my tongue. I started up and said something

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in the debate, and then felt that I had made such a fool of myself (mere vanity; for I had probably done nothing in the least noteworthy) that I vowed I would join the society, go every week, speak every week, and become a speaker or perish in the attempt. And I carried out this resolution. I suffered agonies that no one suspected. During the speech of the debater I resolved to follow, my heart used to beat as painfully as a recruit's going under fire for the first time. I could not use notes; when I looked at the paper in my hand I could not collect myself enough to decipher a word. And of the four or five wretched points that were my pretext for this ghastly practice of mine, I invariably forgot three—the best three." Yet in some remarkable way Shaw managed to keep his nervousness a secret from everyone except himself, for at his third meeting he was asked to take the chair. He bore out the impression he had created of being rather uppish and self-possessed by accepting as off-handedly as if he were the Speaker of the House of Commons. He afterwards confessed to me that the secretary probably got the first inkling of his hidden terror by seeing that his hand shook so that he could hardly sign the minutes of the previous meeting. There must have been something provocative, however, even in Shaw's nervous bravado. His speeches, one imagines, must have been little less dreaded by the society than they were by Shaw himself, yet it is significant that they were seldom ignored. The speaker of the evening, in replying at the end, usually paid Shaw the questionable compliment of addressing himself with some vigour to Shaw's remarks, and seldom in an appreciative vein. Conversant with the political theories of Mill and the evolutionary theories of Darwin and his school, Shaw was, on the other hand, "horribly ignorant" of the society's subjects. He knew nothing of political economy; moreover, he was a foreigner and a recluse. Everything struck his mind at an angle that produced reflections quite as puzzling as at present, but not so dazzling. His one success, it appears, was achieved when the society paid to Art, of which it was stupendously ignorant, the tribute of setting aside an evening for a paper on it by a lady in the "aesthetic" dress of the period. "I wiped the floor with that meeting," Shaw once told

me, "and several members confessed to me afterwards that it was this performance that first made them reconsider their first impression of me as a discordant idiot."

Shaw persevered doggedly, taking the floor at every opportunity. Like the humiliated, defiant Disraeli, in his virgin speech in the House of Commons, Shaw resolved that some day his mocking colleagues should hear, aye, and heed him. He haunted public meetings, so he says, "like an officer afflicted with cowardice, who takes every opportunity of going under fire to get over it and learn his business." After his conversion to Socialism, he grew increasingly zealous as a public speaker. He was so full of Socialism that he made the natural mistake of dragging it in by the ears at every opportunity. On one occasion he so annoyed an audience at South Place that, for the only time in his life, he was met with a demonstration of impatience. "I took the hint so rapidly and apprehensively that no great harm was done," Mr. Shaw once said to me; "but I still remember it as an unpleasant and mortifying discovery that there is a limit even to the patience of that poor, helpless, long-suffering animal, the public, with political speakers." Such an incident had never occurred before; and although Shaw has spent his life in deriding the public, he has taken care that such a mortifying experience never occur again. Shaw now began to devote most of his time to Socialist propagandism. An eventful experience came to him in 1883, when he accepted an invitation to address a workmen's club at Woodwich. At first he thought of writing a lecture and even of committing it to memory; for it seemed hardly possible to speak for an hour, without text, when he had hitherto spoken only for ten minutes in a debate. He now realized that if he were to speak often on Socialism—as he fully meant to do—writing and learning by rote would be impossible for mere want of time. He made a few notes, being by this time cool enough to be able to use them. He found his feet without losing his head: the sense of social injustice loosened his tongue. The lecture, called "Thieves," was a demonstration of the thesis that the proprietor of an unearned income inflicted on the community exactly the same injury as a burglar. Fortified by *arva indig-*

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natio. Shaw spoke for an hour easily. From that time forth he considered the battle won.

In March, 1886, Shaw participated in a series of public debates held at South Place Institute, South Place, Finsbury, E.C. Here for the first time he tried his hand, in a fairly large hall, on an audience counted by hundreds instead of scores. "Socialism and Individualism" was the general title of this series of Sunday afternoon lectures.* This was a daring undertaking for Shaw, who had neither the experience nor the *savoir faire* of his colleagues. It was perhaps for this reason that he did not particularly distinguish himself, his opponent giving him as good as he sent. Mrs. Besant, a born orator, was interesting and eloquent, while Webb quite eclipsed Shaw, positively annihilating his adversary. One who knew him well at this initial stage, however, said that if Bernard Shaw knew nothing, he invented as he went along. The lightness of touch, the nimbleness of intellect, lacked complete development. At this time the clever young Irishman had neither memory enough for effective facts, nor presence of mind enough to be an easy winner in debate.

No one has yet measured the all important influence Sidney Webb has exerted upon Shaw's career, dating from that memorable evening at the Zetetical Society when Shaw gazed in open mouthed wonder at that miracle of effectiveness and model of self possession. Shaw's admiration has waxed, not waned, with the passage of time. To day he regards Webb as one of the most extraordinary and capable men alive. The critic who,

* On March 8th, Mrs. Annie Besant (Fabian Society) spoke *versus* Mr. Corrie Grant, subject: "That the existence of classes who live upon unearned incomes is detrimental to the welfare of the community, and ought to be put an end to by legislation." On March 15th, Mr. G. H. Shaw (Fabian Society) *versus* Mr. F. W. Ford, subject: "That the welfare of the community necessitates the transfer of the land and existing capital of the country from private owners to the State." On March 22nd, Mr. Sidney Webb (Fabian Society) *versus* Dr. T. H. Napier, subject: "That the main principles of Socialism are founded on, and in accordance with, modern economic science." On March 29th, Mr. H. H. Champion *versus* Mr. Wordsworth Donisthorpe (Liberty and Property Defence League), subject: "That State interference with, and control of, industry is inevitable, and will be advantageous to the community."

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(Fabian Society.)

Subject: "That the existence of classes who live upon unearned incomes is detrimental to the welfare of the Community, and ought to be put an end to by Legislation."

March 13th.

MR. G. BERNARD SHAW *versus* REV F W FORD.
(Fabian Society.)

Subject: "That the welfare of the Community necessitates the transfer of the land and existing capital of the Country from private owners to the state."

March 20th.

MR. SIDNEY WEBB *versus* DR. T. B. NAPIER.
(Fabian Society.)

Subject: "That the main principles of Socialism are founded on, and in accordance with Modern Economic Science."

March 27th.

MR. H. H. CHAMPION

versus

MR. WORDSWORTH DONISTHORPE.
(Liberty and Property Defence League.)

Subject: "That State interference with, and control of industry is inevitable, and will be advantageous to the Community."

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THE CART AND TRUMPET

in Disraelian phrase, regards Shaw as "one vast appropriation clause," will find some support for this belief in Shaw's statement that the difference between Shaw with Webb's brains and knowledge at his disposal, and Shaw by himself, is enormous. "Nobody has as yet gauged it," Mr. Shaw once said in a letter to me, "because as I am an incorrigible mountebank, and Webb is one of the simplest of geniuses, I have always been in the centre of the stage whilst Webb has been prompting me, invisible, from the side." Shaw's faculties of acquisitiveness and appropriation are enormously developed, a fact once comically accentuated by him in the frank avowal he once made to me: "I am an expert picker of other men's brains, and I have been exceptionally fortunate in my friends."

It was not without severe training and incessant work that Shaw and his fellow Fabians acquired the equipment in the historic and economic weapons of Social Democracy, comparable to that which Ferdinand Lassalle in his day so defiantly flaunted in the faces of his adversaries. While Stead, Hyndman and Burns were organizing the unemployed agitation in the streets, the Fabians were diligently training themselves for public life. Frank Podmore, a Post Office civil servant, and Edward Reynolds Pease, present secretary of the Fabian Society, two original Fabians, were great friends, and the earliest Fabian meetings were held alternately at Pease's rooms in Osnaburgh Street, and at Podmore's, in Dean's Yard, Westminster.* Certain of

* At this time, it is interesting to recall, Pease and Podmore were deeply interested in the Psychical Research Society, which had its office in the Dean's Yard rooms. In this way the Fabians, Shaw in particular, were brought in close touch with the exploits of this society at its most exciting period, when Madame Blavatsky was exposed by the American, R. Hodgson. Compare, for example, Shaw's two book-reviews in the *Pall Mall Gazette*: *A Scotland Yard for Spectres*, being a notice of the *Proceedings of the Society for Psychical Research* (January 23d, 1886), and *A Life of Madame Blavatsky* (January 6th, 1887). On one eventful evening Shaw attended a Fabian meeting, then went on to hear the end of a Psychical Research *séance*, and ended by sleeping in a haunted house with a committee of ghost-hunters. Picture, if you can, Shaw's deep mortification, his intense disgust over having a nightmare on that night of all nights, and waking up in a corner of the room struggling desperately with the ghost.

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the Fabians sadly felt the need of solid information and training, in addition to that afforded by the meetings of the society. Thrown upon their individual resources, those most scholarly inclined of the Fabians, a veritable handful, founded the Hampstead Historic Club. First established as a sort of mutual improvement society for those ambitious Fabians wishing to read, mark, learn and inwardly digest Marx and Proudhon, this club was afterwards turned into a systematic history class in which each student took his turn at being professor. Thus they taught each other what they themselves wished to learn, acquiring the most thorough and minute knowledge of the subject under discussion. In these days Shaw, Webb, Olivier and Wallas were the bravoes of advanced economics—the Three Musketeers and D'Artagnan. As Olivier and Wallas were men of very exceptional character and attainments, Shaw was enabled, as he once expressed it in my presence, to work with a four-man-power equal to a four-hundred-ordinary-man-power, which made his *feuilletons* and other literary performances “quite unlike anything that the ordinary hermit-eraser could produce.” Mr. Shaw thus explained very quaintly the secret of his success at this period. “In fact the brilliant extraordinary Shaw *was* brilliant and extraordinary; but then I had an incomparable threshing machine for my ideas—a machine which contributed heaps of ideas to my little store, and when I seemed most original and fantastic, I was often simply an amanuensis with a rather exceptional literary knack cultivated by dogged practice.” And of his three warm friends he freely confessed: “They knocked a tremendous lot of nonsense, ignorance and vulgarity out of me, for we were on quite ruthless terms with one another.”

Another associate, one of the Fabian essayists and now a journalist, Hubert Bland, was—and is still—of great value to Shaw and his colleagues, by reason of his strong individuality and hard common sense, and on account of the fact that his views ran counter to Webb's on many lines. Bland lived at Blackheath, on the south side of the river, at this time; and his wife, the very clever woman and distinguished author, “E. Nesbit,” was a remarkable figure at the Fabian meetings during

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the first seven or eight years of its existence. During the era of the Hampstead Historic Club, Bland had a circle of his own at Blackheath; and although Hampstead, lying north of London, was quite out of Bland's district, Shaw and his friends used sometimes to descend on his evening parties. Bland had an utter contempt for the Bohemianism of Shaw and his companions, evincing it by wearing invariably an irreproachable frock-coat, tall hat, and a single eyeglass which infuriated everybody. Mrs. Bland graciously humoured the reckless Bohemianism of the *insouciant* Fabians, and on one memorable occasion stopped them at her door, went for needle and thread, and—perhaps with a faint hope of preserving the *haut ton* of her social evening—then and there sewed up the sleeve of Sidney Olivier's brown velveteen jacket. A *dernier ressort*, for the sleeve was all but torn out! There was some compensation in the fact that, even then, Olivier fully looked the dignified part he was one day to fill. But it is not easy to doubt that the arrant Bohemianism of the luckless Fabians, their reckless disregard of evening dress, must have been very trying to the decorum of Blackheath.

Of fierce Norman exterior and great physical strength, Bland dominated others by force of sheer size. Pugnacious, powerful, a skilled pugilist, and with a voice which Mr. Shaw once accurately described as being exactly "like the scream of an eagle," he made such a formidable antagonist that no one dared be uncivil to him. Just as William Clarke always combated and consequently stimulated Shaw by a diametrically opposite point of view, so Bland exerted a like influence upon Sidney Webb, and indirectly upon Shaw. Strongly Conservative and Imperialist by temperament, Bland stood in sharp contrast to the Millite, Benthamite recruits of the Fabian Society. There were many other clever fellows, many other good friends in Shaw's circle at this time; but through circumstances of time, place and marriage—the changes and chances of this mortal life—they could not be in such close touch with Shaw, Webb, Olivier and Wallas as were these four with one another.

It is not, of course, to be supposed that Shaw was merely the

recipient, like Molière always taking his material where he found it. In his own peculiar and, at times, vastly irritating way, he made his personality strongly felt, exerting great influence by sheer force of a sort of perverse common sense. To employ Poe's apt descriptive, he was the Imp of the Perverse made flesh. In the circle of the Fabians there was room for considerable strife of temperaments, and in the other Socialist societies, quarrels and splits and schisms were rather frequent. Unquestionably Shaw's quintessential service to the Fabians lay in his pioneering ideas and his knack of drafting things in literary form and arranging his colleagues' ideas for them with Irish lucidity. A somewhat less conspicuous, yet little less important, service consisted in clearing the atmosphere, in easing off the personal friction which not infrequently produced smoke and at times threatened to kindle a conflagration. This personal friction Shaw managed to eliminate in a most characteristic way: by a sort of tact which superficially looked like the most outrageous want of it. Whenever there was a grievance, instead of trying to patch matters up, Shaw would deliberately betray everybody's confidence after the fashion of Sidney Trefusis, by stating it before the whole set in the most monstrously exaggerated terms. What would have been the result among acquaintances less closely linked by ties of personal friendship it is easy to imagine. The usual result, however, of Shaw's hazardous and tactless outspokenness was that everybody repudiated his monstrous exaggerations, and whatever of grievance there was in the matter was fully explained. Of course, Shaw was first denounced as a reckless mischief-maker, and afterwards forgiven as a privileged lunatic.

Once every fortnight, for a number of years, Shaw attended the meetings of the Hampstead Historic Club; and in the alternate weeks he spent a night at a private circle of economists which subsequently developed into The Royal Economic Society. Fabian, and especially Shavian, Socialism is strictly economic in character, a circumstance due in no small measure to the fact that in this circle of economists the social question was left out and the work kept on abstract economic lines. In speaking of this period, Shaw afterwards confessed:

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"I made all my acquaintances think me madder than usual by the pertinacity with which I attended debating societies and haunted all sorts of hole-and-corner debates and public meetings and made speeches at them. I was President of the Local Government Board at an amateur Parliament where a Fabian ministry had to put its proposals into black and white in the shape of Parliamentary Bills. Every Sunday I lectured on some subject I wanted to teach to myself; and it was not until I had come to the point of being able to deliver separate lectures, without notes, on Rent, Interest, Profits, Wages, Toryism, Liberalism, Socialism, Communism, Anarchism, Trade-Unionism, Co-operation, Democracy, the Division of Society into Classes, and the Suitability of Human Nature to Systems of Trust Distribution, that I was able to handle Social Democracy as it must be handled before it can be preached in such a way as to present it to every sort of man from his own particular point of view. In old lecture lists of the Society you will find my name down for twelve different lectures or so. Nowadays (1892), I have only one, for which the secretary is good enough to invent four or five different names." *

The only opponents who held their own against the Fabians in debate, men like Levy and Foote, had learned in the harsh school of experience; like the Fabians, they had found pleasure and profit in speaking, in debating, and in picking up bits of social information in the most out-of-the-way places. It was this keen Socialistic acquisitiveness of the Fabians, their readiness to eschew the conventional amusements for the pleasure to be derived from speaking several nights each week, which prepared them for the strenuous platform campaigns of the future. And such fun it was to the Fabian swashbucklers! After being "driven in disgrace" out of Anderton's Hotel, and subsequently out of a chapel near Wardour Street in which they had sought sanctuary, the Fabians went to Willis's Rooms,

* Tract No. 41, *The Fabian Society Its Early History*, by G. Bernard Shaw.

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the most aristocratic and also, as it turned out, the cheapest place of meeting in London. "Our favourite sport," says Shaw, "was inviting politicians and economists to lecture to us, and then falling on them with all our erudition and debating skill, and making them wish they had never been born." On one occasion the Fabians confuted Co-operation in the person of Mr. Benjamin Jones on a point on which, as Shaw afterwards confessed, they subsequently found reason to believe that they were entirely in the wrong and he entirely in the right. The 16th of March, 1888, commemorates the most signal victory of the Fabians in this species of guerrilla warfare. On that night of glorious memory a well-known member of Parliament, now the Secretary of State for War, lured into the Fabian ambushade, was butchered to make a Fabian holiday. The following ludicrous account of the incident was written by the Individualist, Mr. G. Standring, in *The Radical*, March 17th, 1888. Picture to yourself the scene—a spacious and lofty apartment, brilliantly lighted by scores of wax candles in handsome candelabra, and about eighty ladies and gentlemen, seated around on comfortable chairs, lying in wait for the unsuspecting M.P. The company is composed almost exclusively of members of the Fabian Society:—“A Socialist body whose motto is: Don't be in a hurry; but when you *do* go it, go it thick!”

“Such were the surroundings when, on March 16th, Mr. R. B. Haldane, M.P., was brought forth to meet his fate. The hon. gentleman, who is a lawyer and Member for Haddingtonshire, was announced to speak on ‘Radical Remedies for Economic Evils,’ but one could easily see that this was a mere ruse of war. The Fabian fighters were drawn up in battle array before the Chairman's table, ready for the fatal onslaught.

“Truth to tell, Mr. Haldane did not appear at all alarmed at the prospect of his impending butchery. Erect and manly, he stood at the table, and in calm, well-chosen language showed cause for his belief that Radical principles and Radical methods are sufficient to cure the evils of society. He then critically examined a Fabian pam-

phlet, 'The True Radical Programme,' and put in demurrers thereto. The hon. and learned gentleman spoke for an hour, and as I sat on my cushioned chair, encompassed round about by Socialists, breathing an atmosphere impregnated with Socialism, I listened, and softly murmured: 'Verily, an angel hath come down from heaven!'

"As the last words of Mr. Haldane died away, the short, sharp tones of the Chairman's voice told that the carnage was about to commence. After some desultory questioning, Mr. Sidney Webb sprang to his feet, eager, excited and anxious to shake the life out of Mr. Haldane before anyone else could get at him. He spoke so rapidly as to become at times almost incoherent. Mr. Webb seemed to be charged with matter enough for a fortnight, and he was naturally desirous to fire as much of it as possible into the body of the enemy. At length the warning bell of the Chairman was heard, and the attack was continued by Mrs. Annie Beant, who, standing with her back to the foe, occasionally faced round to emphasize a point. Then up rose George Bernard Shaw, and as he spoke, his gestures suggested to me the idea that he had got Mr. Haldane impaled upon a needle, and was picking him to pieces limb by limb, as wicked boys disintegrate flies. Mr. Shaw went over the Radical lines as laid down by his opponent, and this was the burden of his song: That is no good, this is no good, the other is no good—while you leave nine hundred thousand millions, in the shape of Rent and Interest, in the hands of an idle class. Let us nationalize the nine hundred thousand millions, and all these (Radical) things shall be added unto you. Mr. Shaw fired a Parthian shot as he sat down. Mr. Haldane had spoken of education, elementary and technical, as a means of advancing national welfare. Shaw met this with open scorn, and declared that the most useful and necessary kind of education was the education of the Liberal party! With that he subsided in a rose-water bath of Fabian laughter.

"The massacre was completed by two other members of the Society, and then the Chairman called upon Mr. Hal-

dane to reply. Hideous mockery! the Chairman knew that Haldane was *dead*! He had seen him torn, tossed and trampled underfoot. Perhaps he expected the ghost of the M.P. to rise and conclude the debate with frightful gibberings of fleshless jaws and gestures of bony hands. Indeed, I heard a rustling of papers, as if one gathered his notes for a speech; but I felt unable to face the grisly horror of a phantom replying to its assassins, so I fled."

The three great influences, formative and determinative, whose importance in their bearing upon Shaw's career can scarcely be overestimated, are: first, minute and exhaustive researches into the economic bases of society; second, his persevering efforts as a public man toward the practical reformation of patent social evils; and, third, his strenuous activity persisted in for many years, as a public speaker and Socialist propagandist. His plays are so permeated with the spirit of economic and social research that they may be called, with little exaggeration, clinical lectures upon the social anatomy of our time. Shaw, the public man, the man of affairs, never the literary recluse of the ivory tower, stands revealed alike in criticism and drama. There is more truth than jest in Shaw's statement, generally greeted with derisive scepticism, that his plays differ from those of other dramatists because he has been a vestryman and borough councillor. And there is scarcely a play of Shaw's which does not bear the hall-mark of the facile debater. His weekly *feuilletons*, his literary criticisms, provocative, argumentative, controversial, smack of the arena and the public platform.

This close touch with actual life, this vital association with public effort and social reform, have imparted to Shaw's literary productions a rare, an unique flavour. He has gone down unflinchingly into the pitiless and dusty arena to joust against all comers. Shaw has never lived the literary life, never belonged to a literary club. He has never lived "*l'auguste vie quotidienne d'un Hamlet*," who, as Maeterlinck asserts, has time to live because he does not act. Shaw has found life in action, action in life. Although he brought all his powers unsparingly

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to the criticism of the fine arts, he never frequented their social surroundings. When he was not actually writing or attending performances, his time was fully taken up by public work, in which he was fortunate enough to be associated with a few men of exceptional ability and character. From 1883 to 1888, he was criticizing books in the *Pall Mall Gazette* and pictures in the *World*. This left him his evenings free; consequently he did a tremendous amount of public speaking and debating—speaking in the open air, in the streets, in the parks, at demonstrations anywhere and everywhere. While he never belonged to a literary club, so called, he was a member of several literary societies in London. His intimate acquaintance with Shakespeare was improved by his quiet literary off-nights at the New Shakespeare Society under F. J. Furnival. Elected a member of the Browning Society by mistake, Shaw stood by the mistake willingly enough, and spent many breezy and delightful evenings at its meetings. "The papers thought that the Browning Society was an assemblage of long-haired aesthetes," Shaw once remarked to me; "in truth, it was a conventicle where pious ladies disputed about religion with Furnival, and Gonner and I egged them on." * When Furnival founded the Shelley Society, Shaw, of course, joined that, and became an extremely enthusiastic and energetic member. It was at the Shelley Society's first large meeting that Shaw startled London by announcing himself as, "like Shelley, a Socialist, an atheist, and a vegetarian." † Shaw was afterwards active in forwarding the fine performance of *The Cenci*, given by the Shelley Society, before it succumbed to its heavy printer's bills. Such were Shaw's recreations; but his main business was Socialism. It was first come first served with Shaw. Whenever he received

* The Gonner here referred to is E. C. K. Gonner, M.A., now Brunner Professor of Economic Science at the University College, Liverpool.

† While Shaw has stated publicly numbers of times that he was an atheist, an explanation here is necessary. Shaw has always had a strong sense of spiritual things; his declarations of atheism should always be taken with the context. "If this be religion," he has virtually said in reply to someone's exposition of religion, "then I am an atheist." In the case of Shelley, it is perfectly plain that Shaw meant that he was all these things a Socialist, an atheist and a vegetarian—in the Shelleyan sense.

an invitation for a lecture, like his own character Morell, he gave the applicant the first date he had vacant, whether it was for a street corner, a chapel, or a drawing-room. He spoke to audiences of every description, from University dons to London washerwomen. From 1883 to 1895, with virtually no exception, he delivered a harangue, with debate, questions, and so on, every Sunday—sometimes twice or even thrice—and on a good many weekdays. This teeming and tumultuous life was passed on many platforms, from the British Association to the triangle at the corner of Salmon's Lane in Limehouse.

In 1888, when he became a critic of music, Shaw was restricted solely to lectures on Sundays, as he could not foresee whether he should have the opera or a concert to attend on week-nights. It is remarkable how much he managed to do, even with this handicap, especially as he had to speak usually on short notice.* At last, as was inevitable with a man burning the candle at both ends, the strain began to tell; Shaw found it impossible to deal with all the applications he received. For an advanced and persistently progressive thinker like Shaw, the unavoidable repetition of the old figures and the old demonstrations in time grew irksome. He felt the danger of becoming, like Morell, a windbag—what George Ade calls a "hot-air machine." By 1895, the machine was no longer by any means in full blast; the breakdown of Shaw's health, in 1898, finished him as a systematic and indefatigable propagandist. His work went on almost uninterrupted, however, although it was no longer explicit propagandism. Indeed, he worked more strenuously than ever on the St. Pancras Vestry, now the St. Pancras Borough Council. Since 1898, Shaw has lectured only occa-

* "Take the amusing, cynical, remarkable George Bernard Shaw, whose Irish humour and brilliant gifts have partly helped, partly hindered the (Fabian) Society's popularity. This man will rise from an elaborate criticism of last night's opera or Richter concert (he is the musical critic of the *World*), and after a light, purely vegetarian meal, will go down to some far-off club in South London or to some street corner in East London, or to some recognized place of meeting in one of the parks, and will there speak to poor men about their economic position and their political duties."—William Clarke, in *The Fabian Society and Its Work*. Preface to *Fabian Essays*. Ball Publishing Co., Boston, 1908.

nally, but often enough for a man who wishes to preserve health and strength. His labour as head of the Fabian Society, during the years 1906-7, in giving form and definiteness to the policy of that society, was one of the greatest works of his life—a work to which he gave his time and energy without stint. Many of his Fabian colleagues assured me that no one but Bernard Shaw could have accomplished so signal and so sweeping a victory. Within a year or two, he will doubtless resign his arduous duties as head and centre of the Fabian Society. And it is probable, he recently told me, that he will ever again undertake another platform campaign.

Shaw's "knack of drafting things," as he calls it, has played an inconsiderable figure in his career. Simultaneously with his separate attack on the platform, Shaw was acquiring what he dominates the "committee habit." Whenever he joined a society—even the Zetetical—his marked executive ability soon preceded him on the committee. In learning the habits of public life and action simultaneously with the art of public speaking, he gained a great deal of valuable experience—experience which cannot be acquired in conventional grooves. The constant and ceremonious criticism of men who were at many points much wiser and better informed than himself, developed in Shaw two distinctive traits—self-possession and impassivity. It is certain that his experience as a man of affairs actively engaged in public work, municipal and political, gave him that behind-the-scenes knowledge of the mechanism and nature of political illusion which seems so cynical to the spectators in front.

According to the current view, Shaw has always been a gracious man-eater, like a lion going about seeking whom he might devour. On the contrary, instead of flinging down the unwilling to any and every one, Shaw never challenged anyone to debate with him in public. To Shaw, it seemed an unfair practice for a seasoned public speaker, and no test at all of the validity of his case—a duel of tongues, of no more value than any other sort of duel. In the eighties, the Socialist League, of which William Morris was the leading figure, made an effort to arrange a debate between Shaw and Charles Bradlaugh, who had graduated from boy evangelist to the rank of

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the most formidable debater to be found in the House of Commons. In more than one place, but notably in *The Quintessence of Ibsenism*, Shaw has paid the highest tribute to the remarkable qualities of Bradlaugh as thinker and dialectician. The Socialist League challenged Bradlaugh to debate, and chose Shaw as their champion, although he was not even a member of that body. Bradlaugh made it a condition that Shaw should be bound by all the pamphlets and utterances of the Social Democratic Federation, a strongly anti-Fabian body. Had Shaw been richer in experience in such matters, he would undoubtedly have let Bradlaugh make what conditions he pleased, and then said his say without troubling about them. As it was, Shaw proposed a simple proposition, "Will Socialism benefit the English people?" with a simple, general definition of Socialism. But Bradlaugh refused this; and the debate--as Bradlaugh probably intended--did not come off. At the time, Shaw was somewhat relieved over the issue, being very doubtful of his ability to make any great showing against Bradlaugh; he has since privately expressed his regret that the debate did not take place. Bradlaugh was a tremendous debater, and in point of "personal thunder and hypnotism" Shaw would have been, in sporting parlance, outclassed. But to Shaw, whose *forte* is always offence, it would have been a great gratification to tackle Bradlaugh in his own hall--the Hall of Science, in Old Street, St. Luke's. At least Shaw could have had his say.

At a later time, Bradlaugh debated the question of the Eight-Hours' Day with H. M. Hyndman--their second platform encounter. But both sides were dissatisfied, as neither of them stuck to his subject, and the result was inconclusive. A debate on the same question was then arranged between Shaw and G. W. Foote, Bradlaugh's successor as President of the National Secular Society. In this, Shaw's only public set debate with the exception of one in earlier days at South Place chapel, the question was ably and carefully argued by both parties, without rancour, bitterness, or personal abuse.* The debate lasting

* In a long contemporary account of the debate, a French newspaper commented approvingly on the high tone maintained throughout, placing

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o nights, and presided over by Mr. G. Standring and Mr. R. Pense in turn, was held at the Hall of Science, London, January 14th and 15th, 1891. The verbatim report, which is still procurable, exhibits the best qualities of Shaw as a cool-headed, logical debater. His two speeches, markedly ironical in tone, are frequently punctuated by the bracketed (applause). Mr. Foote closed one of his speeches with the rather effulgent oration, "Every question must be threshed out by public debate. Let truth and falsehood grapple—whichever be truth and whichever be falsehood, for, as grand old John Milton said, 'Whoever knew truth put to the worse in a free and open encounter?'"—a sentiment greeted with loud applause. To which Shaw delightfully responded: "I do not know, gentlemen, what a free and open encounter might bring about; but if John Milton asks me whether we saw truth put to shame in such an encounter with falsehood as it has a chance of having in the present condition of society, then I reply to John Milton that George Bernard Shaw has seen it put to shame very often." Shaw maintained that a reduction of hours would raise wages, reduce prices, and that doing it by law was the only possible way of doing it. His closing words clearly mirror his view of the nature of Socialism, the reason of its existence.

"I can only say, for myself, that the debate has been a pleasant one to me, because of the friendly terms on which Mr. Foote and I stand. I even imagine there is a bond between Mr. Foote and myself that may serve a little to explain this. Mr. Foote and I, on a certain subject—the established religion of this country—entertain the same views. Now, those views have directed our attention very strongly towards the necessity of maintaining the freedom of the individual to hold what views he likes, to have freedom of speech and association for the purpose of following out all his conclusions, and establishing a genuine culture

English in sharp contrast with French debates on similar subjects, which were not regarded as unqualified successes unless they broke up in personal encounters, with the attendant imprecations, "*Assommoir! A bas les socialistes! A la lanterne!*"

founded on facts, and not on the dogmas of any church whatsoever. I confess that in the days before I had studied economic questions I was filled with the necessity of individual freedom on these points, and that I also had that strong distrust of the State which Mr. Foote has expressed here to-night. But when my attention was turned to the economic side of the question, I soon became convinced that the real secret of the State's hostility to the advance of reasonable views was that Reason condemned the propertied institutions of this country. Property is the real force that hypocritically expresses itself as Religion. I therefore came to the conclusion that we shall never get out of the mess we are in until the workers come to understand that they are already deprived of individual freedom by the irresistible physical force of the State, and that they can escape from its oppression only by seizing on the political power, and using that very State force to emancipate themselves, and impose their will on the minority which now enslaves them. That is the reason that, just as I urge the importance of individual freedom of speech, so I also urge on the workers that they cannot possibly help themselves by individual action so long as this terrible State is outside them, and ready to cut them down at every point. I believe that they can, by concerted action, not merely in trade unions, but in a united democracy, get complete control of the State, and use its might for their own purposes; and when they once come to understand this, I believe their emancipation will only be delayed until they have learned from experience the true conditions of social freedom." *

There is another feature of Shaw's career as a public speaker which exhibits his attitude towards the work in life he had set before him. Shaw fights for what seems to many less like liberty than licence of speech. He never submitted his intelli-

* *The Legal Eight Hours Question.* A two-nights' public debate between Mr. G. W. Foote and Mr. George Bernard Shaw. Verbatim Report. London: R. Forder, 28, Stonecutter Street, E.C. 1891.

gence, his will, or his power to alien domination. He has never belonged to any political party, rightly considered, never cringed under any lash, never realized in his own experience what he himself has called the only real tragedy: "the being used by personally-minded men for purposes which you recognize as base." It was the determination to remain untrammelled in thought and action which forbade his ever accepting payment for speaking. Very often provincial Sunday Societies invited him to come down for the usual ten guineas fee and give the usual sort of lecture, avoiding politics and religion. Shaw's invariable answer to such requests was that he never lectured on anything but politics and religion, and that his fee was the price of his railway ticket third-class, if the place was further off than he could afford to go at his own expense. The Sunday Society would then "come around" and assure Shaw that he might, on these terms, lecture on anything he liked; and he always *did*. Occasionally, to avoid embarrassing other lecturers who lived by lecturing, the thing was done by a debit and credit entry: that is, Shaw took the usual fee and expenses, and gave it back as a donation to the society. Shaw once related to me the circumstances of a most interesting *contretemps*, which alone would suffice to justify his desire for freedom of speech, his wisdom in arming himself against the accusation of being a professional agitator. "At the election of 1892, I was making a speech in the Town Hall of Dover, when a man rose and shouted to the audience not to let itself be talked to by a hired speaker from London. I immediately offered to sell him my emoluments for five pounds. He hesitated; and I came down to four pounds. At last I offered to take five shillings—half a crown—a shilling—sixpence—for my fees, and when he would not take them at that, claimed that he must know perfectly well that I was there at my own expense. If I had not been able to do this, the meeting, which was a difficult and hostile one (Dover being a hopeless, corrupt Tory constituency) would probably have been broken up."

As Mr. Clarence Rook has remarked, London first opened her eyes in wonder over the versatile "G. B. S." when she discovered that in the daytime he preached revolt to the grimy

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East from a tub, and in the evening sent William Archer and the cultured West into peals of merriment over his *Arms and the Man*. In those halcyon transpontine days London began to take pains to be present at Shaw's delightful dialectical performances at Battersea. Shaw lectured often in Battersea because it was John Burns' stronghold. Never was Shaw's skyrocketing brilliance more effectively displayed than in one of his orations at the Washington Music Hall, with Clement Edwards in the chair. In this oration he proved that no conclusion could be drawn from a bare profession of Socialism as to what side a man would take on any concrete political issue. In speaking of this remarkable effort, Mr. Shaw recently told me the following incident: "I remember hearing a workman say to his wife as I came up behind them on my way to the station: 'When I hear a man of intellect talk like that for a whole evening, it makes me feel like a woman.' Which made me feel horribly ashamed of myself. I felt the shabbiest of impostors, somehow, though really I gave him the best lecture I could." With the exception of his two nights' wrestle with G. W. Foote, Shaw's most sustained effort—an oration lasting about four hours—was delivered in the open air on a Sunday morning at Trafford Bridge, Manchester. Shaw takes pleasure in declaring that one of his best speeches, about an hour and a half long, was delivered in Hyde Park in the pouring rain to six policemen sent to watch him, and the secretary of the little society that had invited him to speak. "I was determined to interest those policemen, because as they were sent there to listen to me, their ordinary course, after being once convinced that I was a reasonable and well-conducted person, would be to pay no further attention. But I quite entertained them. I can still see their waterproof capes shining in the rain when I shut my eyes."

Courage and daring, as well as fertility and inventiveness, often enabled Shaw to carry his point or to have his say, in the face of violent and almost invincible opposition. He has more than once actually voted against Socialism in order to forward the motion in hand. And once, in St. James's Hall, London, at a meeting in favour of Woman's Suffrage, he ventured with

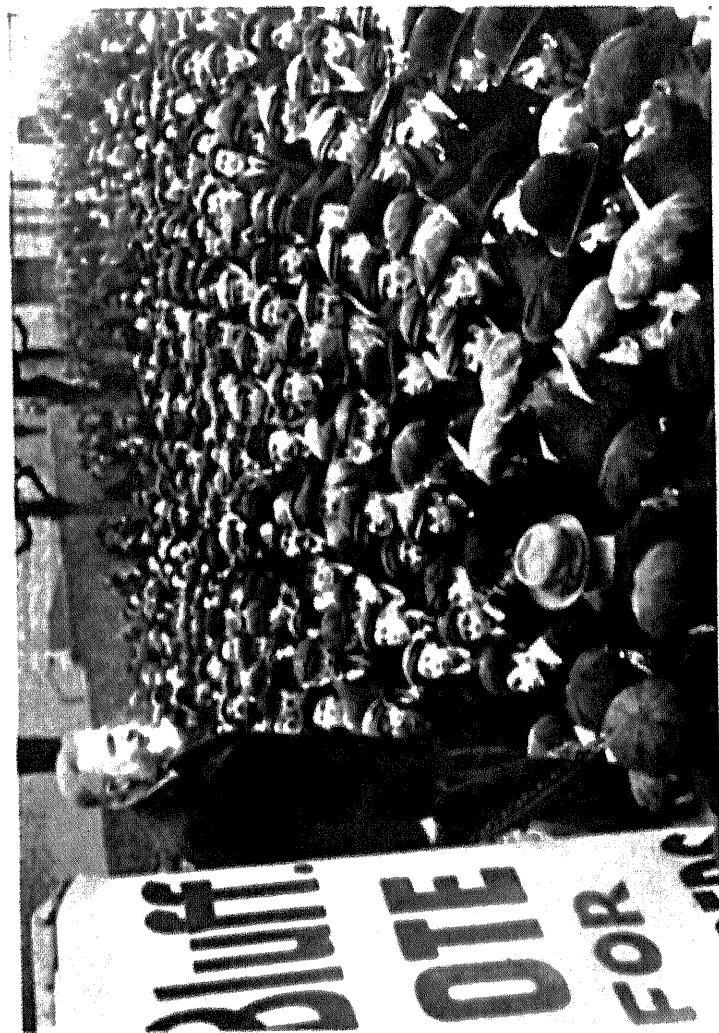
success upon a curious trick, the details of which he once related to me:

"Just before I spoke a hostile contingent entered the room, and I saw that we were outnumbered, and that an amendment would be carried against us. They were all Socialists of the anti Fabian sort, led by a man whom I knew very well, and who was at that time worn out with public agitation and private worry, so that he was excitable almost to frenzy. It occurred to me that if they, instead of carrying an amendment, could be goaded to break up the meeting and disgrace themselves, the honours would remain with us. I made a speech that would have made a bishop swear and a sheep fight. My friend the enemy, stung beyond endurance, dashed madly to the platform to answer me then and there. His followers, thinking he was leading a charge, instantly stormed the platform, and broke up the meeting. Then the assailants reconstituted the meeting and appointed one of their number chairman. I then demanded a hearing, which was duly granted me as a matter of fair play, and I had another innings with great satisfaction to myself. No harm was done and no blow struck, but the papers next morning described a scene of violence and destruction that left nothing to be desired by the most sanguinary schoolboy."

Like Ibsen, Shaw has barely escaped the honour of being imprisoned—an honour which, it is needless to say, he never sought. Fortunately for Shaw, the religious people always joined with the Socialists to resist the police. Twice, in difficulties raised by attempts of the police to stop street meetings, Shaw was within an ace of going to prison. The first time, the police capitulated on the morning of the day when Shaw was the chosen victim. The second time Shaw was so fortunate as to have in a member of a rival Socialist society a disputant for the martyr's palm. One can sympathize with Shaw's secret relief when, on a division, his rival defeated him by two votes!

One of the most remarkable speakers in England to-day, Bernard Shaw is not simply a talent, a personality: he is a public

institution. People flock to his lectures and addresses, and his *bons mots* are quoted in London, New York, Berlin, Vienna and St. Petersburg. He is the most universally discussed man of letters now living. Not since Byron has any British author enjoyed an international audience and vogue comparable to that enjoyed by Bernard Shaw. No one in our time is Shaw's equal in searching analysis and trenchant exposition of the ills of modern society. His ability to see stark reality and to know it for his own makes of him the most powerful pamphleteer, the most acute journalist publicist since the days of Swift. His indictments of the fundamental structure of contemporary society prove him the greatest master of comic irony since the days of Voltaire. Inferior to Anatole France in artistry and urbanity, Shaw excels him in the strenuousness of his personal sincerity and in the scope of his purpose. Shaw's manner of speaking is as individual, as distinctive, as is his style as an essayist or his fingering as a dramatist. That priceless and inalienable gift which has helped to make Jean Jaurès the leader of modern Socialists—the power of touching the emotions—is a quality which Shaw, like Disraeli before him, wholly lacks. In Shaw there is no spark of the mesmeric force, the hypnotic power of the born orator; he lacks that romance, that power of dramatic visualization, which is a quality of all true oratory. While it is true that people do not "orate" in England as they do in America, still there is a vast difference between the born orator, like Jaurès or Mrs. Besant, and the practised public speaker, like Shaw. All that could be acquired, Shaw acquired. Not Charles Bradlaugh himself had a more thorough training than had Shaw. He is facile, fluent and fertile; he does not leave all his qualities behind him when he mounts the platform. In fine, Shaw has fulfilled to the letter his early vow, solemnly taken the night he joined the Zetetical Society. He has delivered considerably more than a thousand public addresses, and the best of them were masterpieces of their kind. And yet Shaw has only a very ordinary voice; and in order to make himself comfortably heard by a large audience he has to be very careful with his articulation and to speak as though he were addressing the auditor furthest from him.



(Naples Club, Naples)

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show addressing the crowd and outside dockyard gate on behalf of Alderman Sanders. G. B. S. is annoyed with the interrupter, but is ready with an instant retort



With his long, loose form, his baggy and rather *bizarre* clothes, his nonchalant, quizzical, extemporaneous appearance; with his red hair and scraggly beard, his pallid face, his bleak smile, his searching eyes flashing from under his crooked brows; with his general air of assurance, privilege and impudence—Bernard Shaw is the jester at the court of King Demos. Startling, astounding, irrepressible, he fights for opposition, clamours for denial, demands suppression. Shaw was once completely floored by a workman, who rose after he had completed a magnificent pyrotechnic display, and said: "I know quite well that Bernard Shaw is very clever at argument, and that when I sit down he will make mince-meat of everything I say. But what does that matter to me? I still have my principles." Shaw had to admit, as he once told me in speaking of the incident, that this was unanswerable and thoroughly sound at bottom. "Call me disagreeable, only call me something," clamours Shaw; "for then I have roused you from your stupid torpor and made you think a new thought." The incarnation of intellect, not of hypnotism, of reason, not of oratory, this strange image of Tolstoy as he was in his middle years has always made his audience think new thoughts. He has never given the audience what it liked; he has always given it what he liked, and what he thought it needed: a bitter and tonic draught. The successes of the orator who is the mere mouth-piece of his audience have never been his. But he has achieved a more enviable and more arduous distinction; I have heard him say with genuine pride that more than once he has been the most unpopular man in a meeting, and yet carried a resolution against the most popular orator present by driving home its necessity. For the transports which the popular orator raises by voicing popular sentiment Shaw has no use. Of the orator's power of entrancing people and having his own way at the same time he has never had a trace. He is the arch-foe of personal hypnotism, of romance, of sensuous glamour. He has sought the accomplishment of the demand of his will; he never practised speaking as an art or an accomplishment. The desire for that, he once told me, would never have nerved him to utter a word in public. Just as Zola used

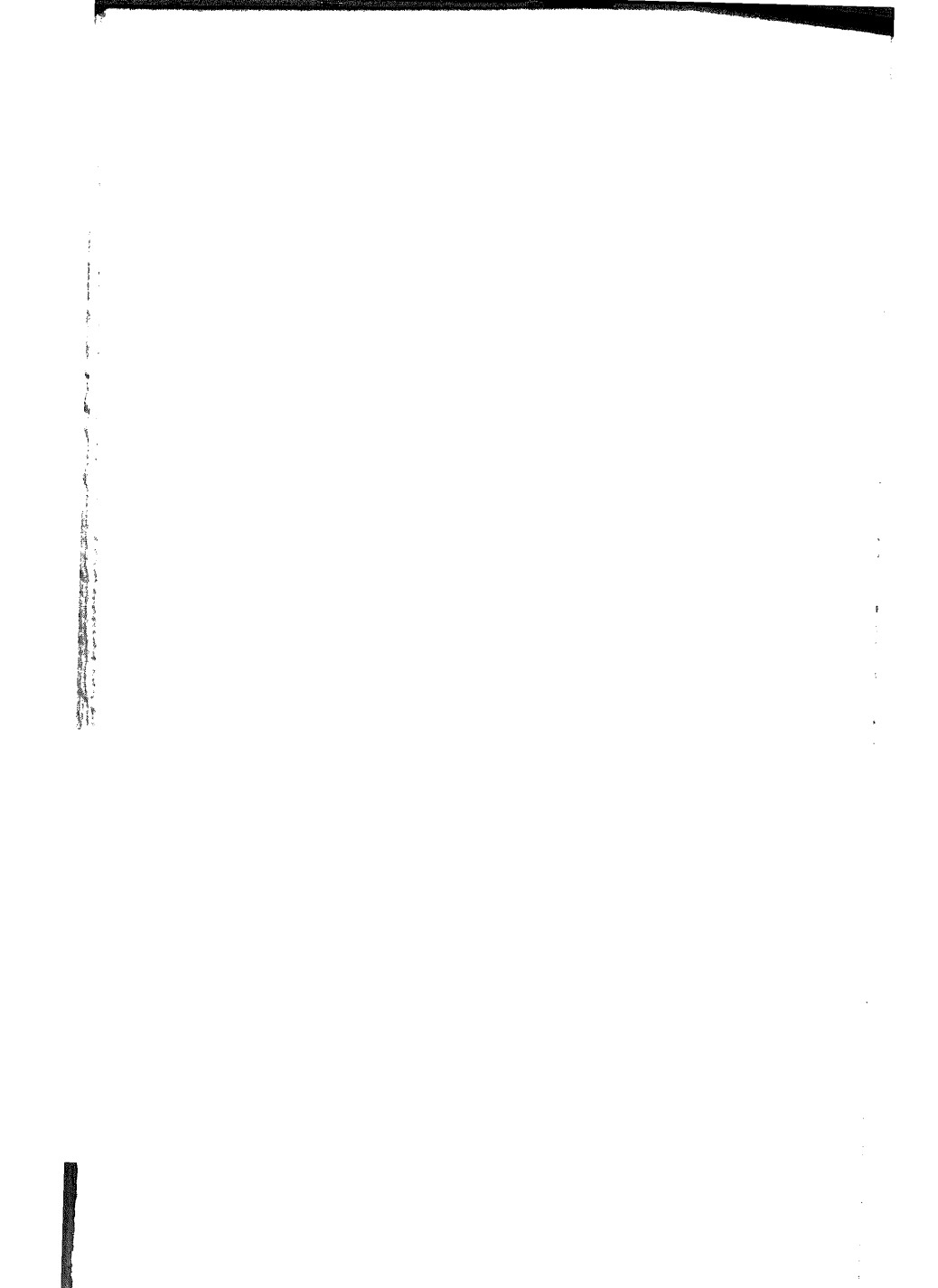
his journalistic work as a hammer to drive his views into the brain of the public, Shaw used his dialectical skill as a weapon, as a means to the end of making people think. One might truly say of all the things that he has either spoken or written: "*Il donne à penser furieusement.*" As a speaker, he first startled and provoked his audience to thought, and then annihilated their objections with the sword of logic and the rapier of wit. His ready answer for every searching query, his instantaneous leap over every tripping barrier, seemed to the novice a proof of very genius. To strange audiences, his readiness in answering questions and meeting hostile arguments seemed astonishing, miraculous. On several different occasions I have heard Mr. Shaw modestly give the explanation of this apparently magic performance. "The reason was that everybody asks the same questions and uses the same arguments. I knew the most effective replies by heart. Before the questioner or debater had uttered his first word I knew exactly what he was going to say, and floored him with an apparent impromptu that had done duty fifty times before." Shaw always carefully thought out the thing for himself in advance, and, which is far more important, had thought out not only an effective, but also a witty answer to the objections that were certain to be raised. This is the secret of Shaw's success in every task which he has undertaken: to think each thing out for himself, and to couch it in terms of scathing satire and fiery wit. His is the sceptical Socratic method pushed to the limit.

Confronted with the point-blank question: "To what do you owe your marvellous gift for public speaking?" Shaw characteristically replied: "My marvellous gift for public speaking is only part of the G. B. S. legend. I am no orator, and I have neither memory enough nor presence of mind enough to be a really good debater, though I often seem to be when I am on ground that is familiar to me and new to my opponents. I learned to speak as men learn to skate or to cycle—by doggedly making a fool of myself until I got used to it. Then I practised it in the open air—at the street corner, in the market square, in the park—the best school. I am comparatively out of practice now, but I talked a good deal to audiences all through the

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eighties, and for some years afterwards. I should be a really remarkable orator after all that practice if I had the genius of the born orator. As it is, I am simply the sort of public speaker anybody can become by going through the same mill. I don't mean that he will have the same things to say, or that he will put them in the same words, for, naturally, I don't leave my ideas or my vocabulary behind when I mount the tub; but I *do* mean that he will say what he has to say as movingly as I say what I have to say and more, if he is anything of a real orator. Of course, as an Irishman, I have some fluency, and can manage a bit of rhetoric and a bit of humour on occasion, and that goes a long way in England. But 'marvellous gift' is all my eye." *

* *Who I Am, and What I Think.* Part I. *The Candid Friend*, May 11th, 1901.



CHAPTER VI

I ONCE heard a Socialist of world wide renown accuse Bernard Shaw of an inconsistency which, to him, was little short of inexplicable. To every charge of inconsistency, Shaw is always ready with the effective rejoinder: "*l'homme absurde est celui qui ne change jamais.*" To Shaw, the stationary is the stagnant, evolution is progress. That rare literary phenomenon, a master of the comic spirit, Shaw is not only willing to admit for the nonce the inconsistencies in his own make-up; he is positively eager to make thereof genuine comic capital.

To the public, Shaw is his own greatest paradox. What defence, they ask, can be devised for a man rooted in Nietzscheism, who champions the Socialism which Nietzsche mocked? Reconcile the ardent apostle of the levelling democracy of a Social-Democratic Republic with the avowed advocate of the doctrines of Ibsen and Nietzsche, the intellectual aristocrats of this distinctly social era? Identify the agitation for international disarmament, for universal peace, with one who sings of arms and the superman? The Irish Nietzsche, the daring pilgrim in search of a moral Ultima Thule, with one who has forcibly declared the impossibility of anarchism? The evangelist preaching the brotherhood of man with one who repudiates the pacifying sedative: "Sirs, ye are brothers," in the statement that he has no brothers, and if he had, he would in all probability not agree with them? What faith is to be put in the economic grounding of one who, in the course of two or three years, turned from vigorous defence of Marx's value theory to its "absolute demolition, on Jevonian lines, with his own hand"?

It is very difficult to understand Shaw's fundamental philosophy of Socialism without a thorough knowledge of the evolutionary course of his thought. The particular brand of Socialism denominated Shavian is not a bundle of prejudices of

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an immature youth, but the integration of years of day-by-day observations of life and character, as well as of political and economic science. The diversities of Socialistic faith have been wittily exhibited by Shaw in the opening scenes of the third act of *Man and Superman*. Roughly speaking, there are three kinds of Socialists: theoretical, Utopian and practical. Lassalle and Marx, Liebknecht and Bebel, Guesde and Jaurès, Hyndman and Kropotkin, Shelley and Morris, George and Bellamy, Shaw and Webb, carry the stamp of the cobweb spinner, the dreamer, or of the man of affairs. It is Shaw's supreme distinction that, beginning as doctrinaire, he has ended as practical opportunist. He has sought to traverse the chasm between democracy and social-democracy, by the aid of a solid economic structure, rather than by the rainbow bridge of sentimentality and Utopism. No scheme finds favour in his eyes which does not irresistibly commend itself to his intelligence. He has found the "true" doctrine of Socialism in repudiation of the follies of Impossibilism.

Shaw has unhesitatingly given credit to Henry George for the great impetus he gave to Socialism in England, and, in particular, for the important part George played in his own career. In speaking of the memorable evening in 1882, when, under the inspiration of George's stirring and eloquent words, he first began to realize the importance of the economic basis, Shaw recently wrote: *

"One evening in the early eighties I found myself—I forget how and cannot imagine why—in the Memorial Hall, Farringdon Street, London, listening to an American finishing a speech on the Land Question. I knew he was an American, because he pronounced 'necessarily'—a favourite word of his—with the accent on the third syllable instead of the first; because he was deliberately and intentionally oratorical, which is not customary among shy people like the English; because he spoke of Liberty, Jus-

* Letter to Hamlin Garland, as Chairman of the Committee, the *Progress and Poverty* dinner, New York, January 24th, 1905. The letter, dated December, 1904, was kindly lent me by Mr. Henry George, Jr.

tice, Truth, Natural Law, and other strange eighteenth-century superstitions; and because he explained with great simplicity and sincerity the views of the Creator, who had gone completely out of fashion in London in the previous decade and had not been heard of there since. I noticed, also, that he was a born orator, and that he had small, plump, pretty hands.

"Now at that time I was a young man not much past twenty-five, of a very revolutionary and contradictory temperament, full of Darwin and Tyndall, of Shelley and De Quincey, of Michael Angelo and Beethoven, and never having in my life studied social questions from the economic point of view, except that I had once, in my boyhood, read a pamphlet by John Stuart Mill on the Irish Land Question. The result of my hearing the speech, and buying from one of the stewards of the meeting a copy of 'Progress and Poverty' for sixpence (Heaven only knows where I got that sixpence!), was that I plunged into a course of economic study, and at a very early stage of it became a Socialist and spoke from that very platform on the same great subject, and from hundreds of others as well, sometimes addressing distinguished assemblies in a formal manner, sometimes standing on a borrowed chair at a street corner, or simply on the kerbstone. And I, too, had my oratorical successes; for I can still recall with some vanity a wet afternoon (Sunday, of course) on Clapham Common, when I collected as much as sixteen and sixpence in my hat after my lecture, for the Cause. And that all the work was not mere gas, let the feats and pamphlets of the Fabian Society attest!

"When I was thus swept into the great Socialist revival of 1888, I found that five-sixths of those who were swept in with me had been converted by Henry George. This fact would have been far more widely acknowledged had it not been that it was not possible for us to stop where Henry George stopped. . . . He saw only the monstrous absurdity of the private appropriation of rent, and he believed that if you took that burden off the poor man's

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back, he could help himself out as easily as a pioneer of a pre-empted clearing. But the moment he took an Englishman to that point, the Englishman saw at once that the remedy was not so simple as that, and that the argument carried us much further, even to the point of total industrial reconstruction. Thus George actually found himself bound to attack the Socialism he had created; and the moment the antagonism was declared, and to be a Henry Georgeite meant to be an anti Socialist, some of the Socialists whom he had converted became ashamed of their origin and concealed it; whilst others, including myself, had to fight hard against the Single Tax propaganda."

However carefully other English Socialists have endeavoured to minimize or deny outright the momentous influence of Henry George, certainly Shaw has neither denied nor belittled their debt. "If we outgrew 'Progress and Poverty' in many ways so did he himself too; and it is perhaps just as well that he did not know too much when he made his great campaign here for the complexity of the problem would have overwhelmed him if he had realized it; or, if it had not, it would have rendered him unintelligible. Nobody has ever got away, or ever will get away, from the truths that were the centre of his propaganda: his errors anybody can get away from." And yet Shaw's insularity and sense of British superiority sticks out in the statement that certain of the English Socialists, including himself, regretted that George was an American, and, therefore, necessarily about fifty years out of date in his economics and sociology from the point of view of an older country! The absurdity of such a contention is glaringly patent on comparison of *Progress and Poverty* with the tracts of the Fabian Society during its early period: George was at least fifty years ahead of the English Socialists, instead of the reverse. With that grandiose conceit which is an essential item of his "stock in trade," Shaw has expressed his eagerness to play the part of Henry George to America. "What George did not teach you, you can learn from his books."

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as national property as cheerfully as you took over the copyrights of all my early books, you would find them excellent institutions, quite in the path of progressive evolution, and by no means to be discouraged or left unregulated as if they were nobody's business but their own. It is a great pity that you all take America for granted because you were born in it. I, who have never crossed the Atlantic, and have taken nothing American for granted, find I know ten times as much about your country as you do yourselves; and my ambition is to repay my debt to Henry George by coming over some day and trying to do for your young men what Henry George did nearly a quarter of a century ago for me."

While Henry George and his *Progress and Poverty* were the prime motors in directing Shaw to Socialism, it was Karl Marx and his *Capital* that first shunted Shaw on to the economic tack. In 1884, the Unitarian minister, Mr. Philip H. Wicksteed, contributed to *To-Day* a criticism of Marx from the point of view of the school of mathematician economists founded in England on the treatise on Political Economy published by the late Stanley Jevons in 1871.* Mr. Wicksteed, whose writings on Dante and Scandinavian literature are well known, was a remarkable linguist, a popular preacher, and an excellent man. To the fact, however, that he was a mathematician is largely attributable his deep interest in Jevons' theory of value, which scientifically demolished the classical theory of Adam Smith, Ricardo and Cairnes, with its adaptation to Socialism by Hodgskin and Marx. To his mathematical training, also, may be ascribed the lucidity and logical clarity of his application of the Jevonian machinery to Marxian theory. So abject was the deification of Marx by English Socialists at that time that Hyndman, whom Shaw thought should answer the article, pooched Wicksteed as beneath his notice. But the Omniscience

* In the early eighties the monthly magazine *To-Day* was purchased by three Socialists: Henry Hyde Champion, Perry Frost and James Leigh Joynes. Mr. Wicksteed's article, entitled *Das Kapital: a Criticism*, appeared in *To-Day*, New Series, Vol. II, pages 398-409, 1904; publishers, The Modern Press, a printing business conducted by Messrs. H. H. Champion and J. C. Foulger.

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and Infallibility of Marx were rudely shaken: Mr. Wicksteed's article had to be answered. Some years later Hyndman accused Shaw of having "rushed in" to defend Marx; but the question here is not of what Mr. Hyndman thinks: it is a question of fact. Shaw was earnestly requested by the proprietors of *The Day* to answer Mr. Wicksteed; but he replied at once that though he had read *Das Kapital* he was not an economist, and that the reply should come from someone with a real mastery of the subject. At last, after a discussion one day in St. Paul Churchyard, Frost disconsolately remarked to Shaw that if he wouldn't do it, he supposed he, Frost, must. Suddenly Shaw realized, as he very recently told me, that none of the others so far as he could see, knew any more about the subject than he himself did; and he consented on the solemn condition that Wicksteed was to be allowed space for a rejoinder. Shaw was not so blind as not to be deeply impressed by his own ignorance of what Carlyle called the "dismal science"; he realized the importance to himself of getting a sound theoretic basis. "I read Jevons," he afterwards wrote, "and made a fearful struggle to guess what his confounded differentials meant; for I knew as little of the calculus as a pig does of a holiday." In his article entitled *The Jevonian Criticism of Marx*, which was more of a counterblast than a thorough analysis and discussion of Mr. Wicksteed's epoch making article, Shaw had not a word to say in defence of Marx's oversight of "abstract utility." Quite clever in its Shavian way, Shaw's article did not get to the root of the matter at all, which was not unnatural, considering that he was a novice, and, as he afterwards freely admitted, completely wrong in the bargain. After the appearance of Mr. Wicksteed's brief rejoinder on pages 177-179 of the same volume, the incident was, for some time, closed.

The discussion only whetted Shaw's interest and left him determined to get to the bottom of the economic question. He

this first tremendous impression, his misgivings found expression in a published letter, in which he jocularly pointed out that what Marx had proved was that we were all robbing each other, and not that one class was robbing another. A joke, founded on clever ignorance, may be a poor beginning for a career; yet in this way was Shaw's career as an economist begun. Shaw never doubted, so green was he, that Hyndman or some other leader would at once expose the fallacy in his letter, and teach him something thereby. The fact that nobody did probably started the misgiving that led him to devote so much time and thought to economics.

It was not without many struggles, however, that Shaw was eventually persuaded to see the fallacies in Marx's economics. In the Hampstead Historic Society, that mutual aid association, and in long private discussions with Sidney Webb, Shaw kept at the subject of Marx, defending him by every shift he could think of. All the time, at bottom, Shaw was satisfied neither with his own position nor with Webb's, which was that of John Stuart Mill. He had always mistrusted mathematical symbols since the time of his school days, when a plausible schoolboy used to prove to him by algebra that one equals two—presumably by one of the inadmissible division-by-zero proofs. The boy always began by saying: "Let $x = a$." Shaw saw no harm in admitting that, and the proof followed with apparently rigorous exactness. "The effect was not to make me proceed habitually on the assumption that one equals two," I once heard him say with a boyish laugh; "but to impress upon me that there was a screw loose somewhere in the algebraic art, and a chance for me to set it right some day when I had time to look into the subject." And so, when he saw Jevons' x 's, his differentials and his infinitesimals, Shaw at once thought of the plausible boy, and was fired to find that loose screw in Jevonian economics. The difficulty he felt most was that he could not, among Socialists, get into a sufficiently abstract atmosphere to arrive at the pure theory of the thing. It was essential to divorce the discussion absolutely from the social question. Fortunately, yet oddly enough, it was Wicksteed himself who helped Shaw to what he wanted. One of Wicksteed's friends, a pro-

perous stockbroker named Beeton, began inviting a circle of friends interested in economics to his house. The *To Day* discussion had established friendly relations between Shaw and Wicksteed; and Shaw secured an entry to this circle and "held on to it like grim death" until after some years it blossomed out into The Royal Economic Society, founded the *Economic Journal*, and outgrew Beeton's drawing-room. Mr. Shaw once remarked to me that his great difficulty was to see through Marx's fallacy in assuming that abstract labour was the unique factor by which the celebrated equation of Value was divisible. "I couldn't, for the life of me," said Mr. Shaw, "see any sense in the equation $2a + 3b = 8c$. I actually bought an Algebra and tried to recapture any early knowledge I might have had, but it was all gone." And only the other day I ran across this book, *The Scholar's Algebra*, by Lewis Hensley, at a second-hand book-shop in London. Under date "22-8 87," appears the following, written in Shaw's remarkably neat stenography: "What sudden freak induced me to purchase this book? I saw it offered at a second-hand book-shop in Holborn for one and sixpence. For a time I was puzzled by a notion that the symbols referred to things instead of to numbers. For instance, $2a + 3b$ appeared to me as absurd as 2 wrenches + 3 apples."

In a letter to me Mr. Shaw once related the following story of his economic education—a story which gives the lie to his own strictures on University education. And in conversation he recently admitted to me that this economic training corresponded closely to the highest form of University instruction.* "During those years Wicksteed expounded 'final utility' to us with a blackboard except when we got hold of some man from

* The leading members of this club were Beeton, Wicksteed, Foxwell, Graham Wallas, F. Y. Edgeworth, Alfred Marshall, Edward Cunningham, Charles Wright and Armitage Smith. The club met monthly from November to June—during the years 1884 to 1889 inclusive, when it came to an end through the formation of what was formally entitled *The Economic Club*, organized mainly at the instance of Alfred Marshall. It may be worthy of mention that Wicksteed dedicated his *Alphabet of Economics* to this club. Shaw joined the club because he wanted to learn abstract economics, and he occasionally contributed something to the programme himself. On November 9th, 1886, for example, he read a paper before the society on the subject of *Interest*.

the 'Baltic' (The London Wheat Exchange), or the like, to explain the markets to us and afterwards have his information reduced to Jevonian theory. Among university professors of economics Edgeworth and Foxwell stuck to us pretty constantly, and W. Cunningham turned up occasionally. Of course, the atmosphere was by no means Shavian; but that was exactly what I wanted. The Socialist platform and my journalistic pulpits involved a constant and most provocative forcing of people to face the practical consequences of theories and beliefs, and to draw mordant contrasts between what they professed or what their theories involved and their life and conduct. This made dispassionate discussion of abstract theory impossible. At Beeton's the conditions were practically university conditions. There was a tacit understanding that the calculus of utilities and the theory of exchange must be completely isolated from the fact that we lived, as Morris's mediæval captain put it, by 'robbing the poor.' "

In the heated discussions over Marx's economic theories which followed during the next few years, Shaw enjoyed an immense advantage in that nobody else in the Socialist movement had gone through this discipline, which required considerable perseverance and deep scientific conviction. It ended, as Shaw maintains, in his finding out Marx and Hyndman completely as economists. In Shaw's present view Marx was less an economist than a revolutionary Socialist, employing political economy as a weapon against his adversaries: to Marx, the economic theory of Ricardo was simply a "stick to beat the capitalist dog." To Hyndman, doubt of any part of the "Bible of the working classes" was Socialist heresy: the whole issue revolved itself into the question whether Jevons was a Socialist or an anti Socialist.* No doubt the influence which moved Shaw to devote himself to economic studies was his need of a weapon; but he did not stop to ask whether the steel came from a Socialist foundry or not. "The Marxian steel was always snapping in my hand," he once

* As late as 1903 Mr. R. Belfort Hoag is found maintaining that Jevons was the mere tool of capitalism, seeking to undermine the Marxian theory of value in the interests of social order and political stability. Compare his article, *Socialism and Heterogeneous Culture*, in *Wiltshire's Magazine*, 1903.

remarked to me. "The Jevonian steel held and kept its edge and fitted itself to every emergency. And then, just as one loves a good sword for its own sake, so one loves a sound theory for its own sake." As a literary artist also, accustomed to express himself in terse and pointed phrase, Shaw was fired with determination to extricate the theory from its "damned shorthand" of mathematical symbols, and put it into human language.*

On the appearance of the English translation from the third German edition of *Das Kapital*, by Samuel Moore and Edward Aveling, in 1887, Shaw reviewed it in three consecutive articles. These articles of Shaw's show that in 1887 his conversion to Wicksteed was complete. In Shaw's article, *Stanley Jevons, His Letters and Journal*, a review of the *Letters and Journal of W. Stanley Jevons*, which appeared in the *Pall Mall Gazette* May 29th, 1886, he says: "He (Jevons) was far too orthodox in his practical conclusions for those materialists of the science—the revolutionary Socialists—who saw in him a mere 'bourgeois economist,' as their phrase goes. He does not seem to have had any suspicion that Mr. Hyndman and his friends made any economic pretensions at all; but it is remarkable that the most successful attack so far on the value theory of Karl Marx has come from Mr. Philip Wicksteed, a well known Unitarian minister, who is an able follower of Jevons in economics." Shaw was now the complete Jevonian, had thrown the Marxian theory completely over, and exactly located the step Marx missed. Shaw himself readily admits that Marx came within one step of the real solution. Whilst Marx left Shaw unconvinced as to Marxian economics, he left him profoundly imbued with

* This Shaw achieved with great success in his review, in three parts, of *Das Kapital*, English translation, which appeared in the *National Reformer*.

† The *National Reformer*, now extinct, then the weekly organ of the National Secular Society, editors, Charles Bradlaugh and Annie Besant, policy, Atheism, Malthusianism and Republicanism. These articles, three in number, under the general heading *Karl Marx and 'Das Kapital'*, appeared in Vol. I., pages 84-86, 106-108, 117, 118. On receiving a cheque for these articles at a rate which he felt sure the *National Reformer* could not afford, Shaw found that the beneficent Mrs. Besant had made a contribution from her private purse, which Shaw characteristically hurled back with indignant gratitude.

Marxian convictions. In Marx, Shaw discerned one who "wrote of the nineteenth century as if it were a cloud passing down the wind, changing its shape and fading as it goes; whilst Ricardo the stockbroker and De Quincey the high Tory, sat comfortably down before it in their office and study chairs as if it were the Great Wall of China, safe to last until the Day of Judgment with an occasional coat of whitewash." While refusing to deify Marx as a god, Shaw lauds him with what is, for him, the rarest of panegyrics. "He (Marx) never condescends to cast a glance of useless longing at the past; his cry to the present is always, 'Pass by: we are waiting for the future.' Nor is the future at all mysterious, uncertain, or dreadful to him. There is not a word of hope or fear, nor appeal to chance or providence, nor vain remonstrance with Nature, nor optimism, nor enthusiasm, nor pessimism, nor cynicism, nor any other familiar sign of the giddiness which seizes men when they climb to heights which command a view of the past, present and future of human society. Marx keeps his head like a god. He has discovered the law of social development, and knows what must come. The thread of history is in his hand."

The point to be grasped, however, is contained in Shaw's admonition: "Read Jevons and the rest for your economics, and read Marx for the history of their working in the past, and the conditions of their application in the present. And never mind the metaphysics." Shaw stood upon the shoulders of giants, for Jevons had laid the foundations, and Wicksteed it was who first pointed out to English Socialists the flaw in Marx's analysis of wares.* But in that remarkably succinct and lucid style for which he is justly famous, Shaw elaborately analyzed the questionable points in the Marxian structure and explained the latent errors involved, for the comprehension, not simply of the economist, but of the man-in-the-street. It is neither possible, nor even desirable, here to give the steps by which Shaw controverted Marx; reference to Shaw's numerous

* These ideas seem to have found expression simultaneously in England and Austria. Compare *The Theory of Political Economy*, by W. S. Jevons, London, 1871; *Grundsätze der Volkswirtschaftslehre*, by Anton Menger, Vienna, 1871.

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articles on the subject will give these to the curious. But the conclusions he reached are worthy of enumeration.* In the first place, Shaw objected to Marx's dogmatic assertion of the generally accepted Ricardian theory that "wares in which equal quantities of labour are embodied, or which can be produced in the same time, have the same value"; and for the simple reason that the Jevonian theory called this dogma into question. In the second place, following Wicksteed, Shaw takes Marx to task for first insisting that the abstract labour used in the production of wares does not count unless it is useful, and then contradicting himself by stripping the wares of the abstract utility conferred upon them by abstractly useful work. The logical consequence of admitting abstract utility as a quality of wares produced by abstract human labour is conclusively to disconnect value from mere abstract human labour. Marx thus adroitly begs the question: as Shaw says: "It is as if he (Marx) had proved by an elaborate series of abstractions that liquids were fatal to human life, and had finished by remarking: 'Of course, the liquids must be poisonous.'" Armed with the fact of abstract utility, and the Jevonian weapons of "the law of indifference" and "the law of the variation of utility," Shaw was enabled to prove with mathematical rigour that value does not represent the specific utility of the article, but its abstract utility; and not its total abstract utility, but its final abstract utility—at the "margin of supply," in Wicksteed's phrase—i.e. the utility of the final increment that is worth producing. Translated into terms of labour, this means that the value of the ware represents, not the quantity of human labour embodied in it, but the "final utility," in Jevonian phrase, of the abstract human labour socially necessary to produce it. As Shaw puts it: "Instead of wares being equal in value because equal quantities of labour have been expended on them, equal quantities of labour will have been expended on them because they are of

*The question of the validity of the Marxian theory is not now a live subject in England. Mr. Hyndman's defence of the Marxian position is to be found in his *Economics of Socialism*, in which he attempts to demonstrate the "final futility of final utility." It is still a mooted question on the Continent; compare, for example, the works of Böhm-Bawerk, perhaps the most eminent of the "Austrian School" of political economists.

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equal value (or equally desirable), which is quite another thing. That slip in the analysis of wares whereby Marx was led to believe that he had got rid of the abstract utility when he had really only got rid of the specific utility, was the first of his mistakes." Under certain ideal conditions, there is a coincidence between "exchange value" and "amount of labour contained"; but as these ideal conditions seldom, if ever, occur in practice, no scientific validity attaches to the Marxian statement that "commodities in which equal quantities of labour are embodied, or which can be produced in the same time, have the same value." Lastly, Shaw insists that if Marx's theory of value were correct, it would refute, not confirm, Marx's theory of "surplus value." The proprietor's monopoly completely upsets those ideal conditions on which Marx's theory of value is based. It can be demonstrated by Jevonian principles that Marx's assumption, that the subsistence wage is the value of the labourer, is untenable, even on Marxian principles. Marx did not see that it is impossible, according to the "law of indifference," for one part of the stock of a commodity available at any given time to have value whilst another part has none, since no man will give a price for that which he can obtain for nothing. Moreover, when he attempts to differentiate labour power from steam power, Marx's logic breaks down. As Shaw says: "Marx's whole theory of the origin of surplus value depends on the accuracy of his demonstration that steam power, machinery, etc., cannot possibly produce surplus value. If Marx were right then a capital of ten thousand pounds, invested in a business requiring nine thousand pounds for machinery and plant, and one thousand pounds for wages (or human labour power), would only return one-ninth of the surplus value returned by an equal capital of which one thousand pounds was in the form of plant and nine thousand pounds in wage capital. As a matter of fact, the 'surplus value' from both is found to be equal." *

*These conclusions were reached before the third volume of *Capital* appeared. The editor of the first volume, Mr. Frederick Engels, promised that the third volume, when it appeared, would reconcile these and other seeming contradictions. Marx does seem to have modified certain of his theories in the third volume.

Shaw saw plainly enough that the theory of value did not matter in the least so far as the soundness of Socialism was concerned. For, as he once expressed it in a letter to me, "if you steal a turnip the theory of the turnip's value does not affect the social and political aspect of the transaction." But, of course, Hyndman and the few Socialists who had read Marx and nothing else, were furious over Shaw's iconoclastic articles in the *National Reformer*. In view of the fact that the opponents of Socialism continually damaged the cause of the Socialists by alleging that the Socialists' economic basis was Marx's theory and was untenable, with the result that the Socialists persisted in accepting the allegation and defending Marx, Shaw resolutely forced the quarrel into publicity as far as he could. His prime object was to make it clear that the Fabians were quite independent of the Marxian value theory. A heated controversy on the subject in the *Pall Mall Gazette* of May, 1887, engaged in by Shaw, Hyndman, and Mrs. Besant, did not down the ghost of the value theory; for the controversy was reopened in *To-Day* two years later. *An Economic Eirenicon*, by Graham Wallas, was followed by *Marx's Theory of Value*, contributed by H. M. Hyndman, in which, it seems, he merely repeated the old Marxian demonstration without making any attempt to meet the Jevonian attack. Whereupon Shaw "went for" Hyndman in his most aggravating style in an article entitled *Bluffing the Value Theory*, which finished the campaign except for a series of letters in *Justice* by various hands, the tenth of which, in July, 1889, was written by Shaw. There were other letters by Shaw on the same subject, written at different times, which appeared in the *Daily Chronicle*. William Morris never made any pretence of having followed the controversy on its abstract technical side; and perhaps the most amusing feature of the entire campaign was a sort of manifesto which Belfort Bax induced Morris to sign, in which Hyndman, Bax, Aveling and Morris declared that all good Socialists were Marxites! Shaw was once denounced in public meeting by a Marxian Socialist for pooh-poohing Marx as an idiot. His own position, as he himself once remarked to me, lay somewhere between this and that of worshipping Marx as a god. In one of the most re-



A STUDY OF SIN SOCIALISTS.

From a drawing by H. G. Wells, here reproduced by his permission.

markable essays ever written by Shaw, entitled *The Illusions of Socialism*, Shaw pointed out why it was that a difficult and subtle theory like that of Jevons could never be as acceptable as a crude and simple labour theory like that of Marx, which seemed to imply that wealth rightly belonged to the labourer.*

From the standpoint of the Marxian religionist, the second heresy of which Shaw is guilty consists in his recognition of the Class War doctrine as a delusion and a suicidal political policy. To Shaw, the form of organization deduced from the Class War doctrine is always the same. "All you have to do is to form a working-class association, declare war on property, explain the economic situation from the platform and at the street corner, and wait until the entire proletariat (made 'class-conscious' by your lucid lectures) joins you. This being done simultaneously in London, Paris, Berlin, Madrid, Rome, Vienna, etc., etc., nothing remains but a simultaneous movement of the proletarians of all countries, and the sweeping of capitalism into the sea because 'ye are many: they are few.' What can be easier or more scientific?" But a study of the history of Socialism led Shaw to the discovery that the Class War theory had gone to pieces every time it had been invoked. Lassalle attempted to organize the imaginary class-conscious proletariat, only to be disillusioned before the end of the first year by the

* In the *Pall Mall Gazette* the following articles appeared: *Marx and Modern Socialism*, by Shaw, May 7th, 1907, page 3; Hyndman's reply, May 11th, page 11; Shaw's rejoinder *Socialists at Home* (this heading doubtless a jibe of the editor), May 12th, page 11; Hyndman's rejoinder, May 16th, page 2; Mrs. Besant's article on the same subject, May 24th, page 2. In *Tu-Day*, Vol. XI, New Series, 1909, appeared: *An Economic Kironian*, by Graham Wallas, pages 80-89; *Marx's Theory of Value*, by Hyndman, same volume, pages 94-104; Shaw's reply, *Bluffing the Value Theory*, following Hyndman, May, 1909, pages 129-133, was lately reprinted by Eduard Bernstein in *Sozialistische Monatshefte*. Shaw's letter in *Justice* appeared on page 3 of the issue of July 20th, 1909. The fine essay, entitled *The Illusions of Socialism*, quite prestrating in its psychology, although caviare to the ordinary reviewer, originally appeared in German in *Die Zeit* (Vienna), in 1908; No. 108, October 24th, and No. 109, October 31st; later it appeared in English in *Forerunners of the Coming Century*, edited by Edward Carpenter, Manchester: Labour Press, 1907; it afterwards appeared in French in *L'Humanité Nouvelle* (Genev and Paris), August, 1900, edited by Auguste Hamon, the well-known Socialist and the French translator of Shaw's plays.

"damned wantlessness" of the real proletariat. Owen before him likewise had failed, after apparently converting all Trade Unionism to his New Moral World. When Marx planned the Socialist side of "The International" in the sixties, he showed his contempt for the trade-union side, with the result: "On the trade-union side a great success. . . . On the Socialist side a futility and disastrous failure, culminating, in 1871, in one of the most appalling massacres known to history." Marx could scarcely be said to have tried to organize the class-conscious proletariat; but the moment his useless vituperation of Thiers "brilliant as a sample of literary invective, but useless for the buttering of parsnips," made known to English workmen his real opinion of bourgeois civilization, they abandoned him in horror and left the International memberless. In Germany "Liebknecht made no serious headway until he became a parliamentarian, playing the parliamentary game more pliantly than Parnell did, though always 'old-soldiering' his way with the greenhorns by prefacing each compromise with the declaration that Social Democracy never compromised." In France, Jaurès and Millerand have not so much abandoned the Class War doctrine as wholly neglected and ignored it, thus reducing the old Guédist Marxism to absurdity. In England, "the once revolutionary Social-Democratic Federation has been forced by the competition of the quite constitutional Independent Labour Party to give up all its ancient Maccabean poetry, and, after a period of uselessness and surpassing unpopularity as an anti-Fabian Society with a speciality for abusing Mr. John Burns, to settle down into a sort of Ultra-Independent Labour Party ready to amalgamate with its rival if only an agreement can be arrived at as to which is to be considered as swallowing the other."

Not merely a study of the Class War doctrine from the historical standpoint, but also an examination into the assumption upon which it rests, have thoroughly convinced Shaw that Socialists have for long been making overdrafts upon their *Capital*. Shaw has never sought to shirk the real point at issue by the quibble of substituting the sort of class-consciousness called snobbery, mighty as is that social force, for the economic class

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consciousness of the German formula. In Shaw's interpretation, Hyndman and the Marxists use the term "Class War" to denote a war between all the proletarians on one side and all the property-holders on the other in Schaeffle's phrase "a definite confrontation of classes" which will be produced when the workers become conscious that their economic interests are opposed to those of the property holders. Shaw's position is effectively summed up in his words:

"The people understand their own affairs much better than Marx did, and the simple stratification of society into two classes . . . has as little relation to actual social facts as Marx's value theory has to actual market prices. If the crude Marxian melodrama of 'The Class War; or, the Virtuous Worker and the Brutal Capitalist,' were even approximately true to life, the whole capitalist structure would have tumbled to pieces long ago, as the 'scientific Socialists' were always expecting it to do, instead of consolidating itself on a scale which has already made Marx and Engels as obsolete as the Gracchi had become in the time of Augustus. By throwing up fabulous masses of 'surplus value,' and doubling and trebling the incomes of the well-to-do middle classes, who all imitate the imperial luxury and extravagance of the millionaires, Capitalism has created, as it formerly did in Rome, an irresistible proletarian bodyguard of labourers whose immediate interests are bound up with those of the capitalists, and who are, like their Roman prototypes, more rapacious, more rancorous in their Primrose partisanship, and more hardened against all the larger social considerations, than their masters, simply because they are more needy, ignorant and irresponsible. Touch the income of the rich, and the Conservative proletarians are the first to suffer." *

In Shaw's opinion, the social struggle does not follow class lines at all, because the people who really hate the capitalist

* *The Class War*, in the *Clarion*, September 30th, 1904.

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system are, like Ruskin, Morris, Tolstoy, Hyndman, Marx and Lassalle, themselves capitalists, whereas the fiercest defender of it are the masses of labourers, artisans, and employees whose trade is at its best when the rich have most money to spend. Socialists like Shaw, who "do not accept the class war," are simply expressing "first, a very natural impatience of crying 'War, War!' where there is no war; and, second, their despair at seeing Socialism, like Liberalism, perishing because it is trying to live on the crop of home made generalizations so plentifully put forth during the great Liberal boom of 1832-80 by middle-class paper theorists like Malthus, Cobden, Marx, Comte and Herbert Spencer—fine fellows, all of them, but stupendously ignorant of the industrial world." The basic divergence between the Fabian and the "S. D. F." policy is epitomized in Shaw's words: "There is a conflict of interests between those who pay wages and those who receive them; and this is organized by the trade unions. There is another conflict of interest between those workers and proprietors whose customers live on rent (in its widest economic sense), and those whose customers live on wages; but the lines of this conflict run, not between the classes, but right through them, and do not coincide with the lines of the trade union conflict. And any form of Socialist organization, or any tactics toward the trade union movement based on the theory that the lines of battle *do* run between the classes and not through them, or *do* coincide with the trade union lines of battle, will prove, and always has proved, disastrously impracticable." Shaw exasperatingly said in a recent article * that he refused to agree with anybody on any subject whatsoever. "Let them agree with me if my arguments convince them. If not, let them plank down their own views. I will not have my mouth stopped and my mind stifled." And those mystic forces—historical development and Progress with a large P—in which the Marxists rest their firmest hope, Shaw regards in the spirit of Ingoldsby's sacristan:

* Shaw's position in regard to the Class War is ably set forth in his three articles, under the general heading, *The Class War*, which appeared in the *Clarion*, London; dates: September 30th, October 21st and November 4th, 1904.

"The sacristan he said no word to indicate a doubt;
But he put his thumb unto his nose, and he spread his fingers out."

There are two factors which strongly militate against the progress of Socialism; the resolute adherence of Socialists to those theories and policies of Marx which time, experience, and modern economic science have combined to discredit; and the tendency of the popular mind to confuse Socialism with Anarchism.* Shaw's most important negative and destructive achievements consist in those amazingly clever and interesting papers in which he attempts to expose Marx's theory of value as an exploded fallacy, to show that the Class War will never come, and to demonstrate the impossibilities of Anarchism. In the *technical* sense of Socialist economics, Shaw occupies the opposite pole to Individualism and Anarchism. And yet in a very definite and general sense, Shaw is a thorough-paced individualist and anarchist. If individualist means a believer in the Shakespearian injunction "To thine own self be true!", in the Ibsenic doctrine "Live thine own life!", then Shaw is an individualist heart and soul. If anarchist means an enemy of convention, of tradition, of current modes of administering justice, of prevailing moral standards, then Shaw is the most revolutionary anarchist now at large. If, on the other hand, Individualist means one who distrusts State action and is jealous of the prerogative of the individual, proposing to restrict the one and to extend the other as far as is humanly possible, then Shaw is most certainly not an Individualist. If Anarchist means dynamitard, incendiary, assassin, thief; champion of the *absolute* liberty of the individual and the removal of all governmental restraint; or even a believer, as Communist, in a

* In 1888 Shaw wrote two very clever articles, which so far seem to have escaped attention, although the disguise is so thin as to be negligible. These two articles are, respectively, *My Friend Fitzthunder, the Unpractical Socialist*, by Redburn Wash (note the anagram—(*To-Day*, edited by Hubert Bland, August, 1888)), and *Fitzthunder on Himself—A Defence*, by Robespierre Marat Fitzthunder (*To-Day*, September, 1888). These very amusing papers, both written by Shaw, it is needless to say, constitute a *reductio ad absurdum* of the unpractical and revolutionary Socialist; Fitzthunder is evidently a composite picture, made up from a number of Shaw's Socialist *confrères*.

profound and universal sense of high moral responsibility present in all humanity, then Shaw is a living contradiction of Anarchism.

Shaw opposes Individualist Anarchism since, under such a social arrangement, the prime economic goal of Socialism: the just distribution of the premiums given to certain portions of the general product by the action of demand, would never be attained. As this system not only fails to distribute these premiums justly, but deliberately permits their private appropriation, Individualist Anarchism is, in Shaw's view, "the negation of Socialism, and is, in fact, Unsocialism carried as near to its logical completeness as any sane man dare carry it." The Communist Anarchism of Kropotkin, Shaw also opposes because of his own lack of faith in humanity at large, in the present state of development of the social conscience. If bread were communized, the common bread store obviously would become bankrupt unless every consumer of the bread contributed to its support as much labour as the bread he consumed cost to produce. Were the consumer to refuse thus to contribute, there would be two ways to compel him: physical force and the moral force of public opinion. If physical force is resorted to, then the Anarchist ideal remains unattained. If moral force, what will be the event? The answer reveals Shaw as a confirmed sceptic in regard to the value of public opinion as a moral agent. "It is useless," he avers, "to think of man as a fallen angel. If the fallacies of absolute morality are to be admitted into the discussion at all, he must be considered rather as an obstinate and selfish devil who is being slowly forced by the iron tyranny of Nature to recognize that in disregarding his neighbours' happiness, he is taking the surest way to sacrifice his own." Under Anarchistic Communism, public opinion would no doubt operate as powerfully as now. But, in Shaw's opinion, public opinion cannot for a moment be relied upon as a force which operates uniformly as a compulsion upon men to act morally. Keen, incisive, pitiless, his words descriptive of *public opinion* show how little he is tinged with the poetry, the passion, and the religion which are the very life blood of Socialism.

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"Its operation is for all practical purposes quite arbitrary, and is as often immoral as moral. It is just as hostile to the reformer as to the criminal. It hangs Anarchists and worships Nitrate Kings. It insists on a man wearing a tall hat and going to church, on his marrying the woman he lives with, and on his pretending to believe whatever the rest pretend to believe. . . . But there is no sincere public opinion that a man should work for his daily bread if he can get it for nothing. Indeed, it is just the other way; public opinion has been educated to regard the performance of daily manual labour as the lot of the despised classes. The common aspiration is to acquire property and leave off working. Even members of the professions rank below the independent gentry, so-called because they are independent of their own labour. These prejudices are not confined to the middle and upper classes: they are rampant also among the workers. . . . One is almost tempted in this country to declare that the poorer the man the greater the snob, until you get down to those who are so oppressed that they have not enough self-respect even for snobbery, and thus are able to pluck out of the heart of their misery a certain irresponsibility which it would be a mockery to describe as genuine frankness and freedom. The moment you rise into the higher atmosphere of a pound a week, you find that envy, ostentation, tedious and insincere ceremony, love of petty titles, precedence and dignities, and all the detestable fruits of inequality of condition, flourish as rankly among those who lose as among those who gain by it. In fact, the notion that poverty favours virtue was clearly invented to persuade the poor that what they lost in this world they would gain in the next." *

When Shaw attended the International Socialist Congresses in Zurich and in London, he reported them in the *Star* as un-

* Fabian Tract, No. 45: *The Impossibilities of Anarchism*, a paper by Shaw, written in 1898, read to the Fabian Society on October 16th, 1891, and published by the Fabian Society, July, 1893.

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sparingly as he would have reported a sitting of Parliament. The Socialists, amazed and indignant at their first taste of criticism, concluded that Shaw was going over to the enemy. This Fabian policy of unsparing criticism, inaugurated and carried out ruthlessly by Shaw, ended in freeing the Fabians, great measure, from the illusions of Socialism, and in imparting to their Society its rigidly constitutional character. An incident which Mr. Shaw once described in a letter to me, gives one some insight into the causes of his reaction against the German Socialists' policy of playing to the galleries by spouting revolutionary rant and hinting catastrophically of impending revolutions.

"At the Zurich Congress I first became acquainted with the leaders of the movement on the Continent. Chief among them was the German leader Liebknecht, a '48 veteran who, having become completely parliamentarized, still thought it necessary to dupe his younger followers with the rhetoric of the barricade. After a division in which an attempt to secure unanimity by the primitive method of presenting the resolution before the Congress to the delegates of the different nations in their various languages in several versions adapted to their views, so that what they believed they were all saying 'Yes' to the same proposition, the wording was really very different in the different translations, and sometimes highly contradictory, it turned out that the stupidity of the English section had baffled the cleverness of the German-Swiss bureau, because the English voted 'No' when they meant 'Yes,' and upset the apple-cart. Happening to be close to Liebknecht on the platform at the luncheon adjournment, I said a few words to him in explanation of the apparently senseless action of the English. He looked wearily round at me and saw a comparatively young Socialist whom he did not

I turned away as soon and as shortly as I could without being rude; and from that time I discounted the German leaders as being forty years out of date, and totally negligible except as very ordinary republican Radicals with a Socialist formula which was simply a convenient excuse for doing nothing new.

"When the German leaders visited London in the eighties they treated the Fabian Society as a foolish joke. Later on they found their error; and Liebknecht was entertained at a great Fabian meeting; but to this day the German Socialist press does not dare to publish the very articles it asks me to write, because of my ruthless criticism of Bebel, Singer, and the old tradition of the 'old gang' generally. My heresy as to Marx is, of course, another horror to the Germans who got their ideas of political economy in the '48-'71 period."

After 1875, let us recall, the old pressure and discontent of the eighteen-thirties descended upon England with renewed force. In 1881, "as if Chartism and Fergus O'Connor had risen from the dead," the Democratic Federation, with H. M. Hyndman at its head, inaugurated the revival of Socialist organization in England. Like those other haters of the capitalist system the capitalists Ruskin, Morris, Tolstoy, Marx and Lassalle Hyndman "had had his turn at the tall hat and was tired of it." Shortly after the formation of the Democratic Federation, the Fabian Society, a revolting sect from the Fellowship of the New Life, founded by Professor Thomas Davidson, came into being. Hyndman and his Marxists, Kropotkin and his Anarchists, did not realize, with Shaw, that the proletariat, instead of being the revolutionary, is in reality the conservative element of society. They refused to accept this situation, not realizing that they were confronted by a condition, not a theory. "They persisted in believing that the proletariat was an irresistible mass of Felix Pyats and Ouidas." On the point of joining the Democratic Federation, Shaw decided to join the Fabian Society instead. He did accept the situation, helped, perhaps, as he once said, by his inherited

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instinct for anti-climax. "I threw Hyndman over, and got to work with Sidney Webb and the rest to place Socialism on respectable *bourgeois* footing; hence Fabianism. Burns did the same thing in Battersea by organizing the working classes then on a genuine self-respecting working class basis, instead of on the old romantic middle-class assumptions. Hyndman wasted years in vain denunciation of the Fabian Society and of Burns, and though facts became too strong for him at last, he is still at heart the revolted bourgeois." Prior to the year 1886, there had been no formal crystallization of the Fabian Society into a strictly economic association, avowedly opportunist in its political policy; after September 17th of that year the thin edge of the wedge went in. The Manifesto of the Fabian Parliamentary League contains the nucleus of the Fabian policy of to-day.* The Fabian Society was a dead letter until Shaw, Webb, Olivier and Wallas joined it; from that moment, it became a force to be reckoned with in English life. Almost from the very first, as Mr. Sidney Webb once wrote me, the Society took the colour of Shaw's mordantly critical temperament, and bore the stamp of his personality. The promise of the Fabians lay in their open-mindedness, their diligence in the study of advanced economics, and their resolute refusal of adherence to any formula, however dear to Socialist enthusiasts, which did not commend itself unreservedly to their intelligence. By 1888 it had only forty members; and in 1886, it was still unable to bring its roll of members to a hundred names. In 1900, it boasted a membership of eight hundred, and at present about twenty-six hundred names are found upon its rolls.† It is neither possible nor advisable for me to record the history of the Fabian Society—that may be found in the numerous publications of the Society. But I cannot refrain from stating that the membership increased by forty-three per cent. in the year 1906-7, that this was a year of unprecedented activity; and

* Compare the former chapter; complete details are to be found in *Fabian Tract No. 41*, pages 12-15.

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that the Society has recently been greatly strengthened by the accession of many well known men in English public life. There were then *eight* Fabians in the London County Council; and in Parliament, Labour and Socialism have in the last five years been better represented, I believe, than ever before in the history of that body. I have recently talked at length with many of the ablest Socialists in England. The remarkable growth of the Fabian Society and the Socialist representation in English literature, I was told again and again, is not due to any sudden and untrustworthy inflation of Socialist values, but is largely due to the fact that Bernard Shaw, Sidney Webb, Hubert Bland, and their coterie have been planting the seeds for twenty years. Such ideas as are embodied in Mr. Lloyd George's budget and the Old Age Pension Bill are unmistakable marks of that gradual Socialist leavening of English political thought upon which the Fabians have been engaged ever since 1884. "The recent steady influx into the Fabian Society," Mr. Bland said to me energetically, "is a clear proof to my mind that the ideas which have been lurking in the air for a long, long time are at last taking definite shape simultaneously in the minds of a great many people. Such men as Bernard Shaw have brought this thing to pass." *

During the years from 1887 to 1889, the years we are especially concerned with at present, compensation for its paucity of numbers was found not only in the intellectual capacity, but also in the economic inquisitiveness and acquisitiveness of the

* Worthy of record in connection with the new policy of the Fabian Society, although discussion is outside the scope of this work, is the movement inaugurated by Mr. Hollbrook Jackson and Mr. A. R. Orage, afterwards joint editors of the London Socialist organ, *The New Age*, in the foundation of the Leeds Art Club in 1905. "The object of the Leeds Art Club," their syllabus read, "is to affirm the mutual dependence of art and ideas." This movement, supported by a group of able lecturers, proved so successful and so stimulating as to eventuate in the formation of the Fabian Art Group (Bernard Shaw presiding over the initial meeting), the declared object of which is "to interpret the relation of Art and Philosophy to Socialism." Admirable pamphlets and brochures have been published under its auspices; and its meetings, and the Fabian Summer School in Wales, have been addressed by many of the most brilliant and advanced thinkers in England.

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leaders in the Fabian Society. This is best revealed in Shaw's sketch of this period:

"By far our most important work at this period was our renewal of that historic and economic equipment of Social-Democracy of which Ferdinand Lassalle boasted, and which has been getting rustier and more obsolete ever since his time and that of his contemporary, Karl Marx. . . . In 1885 we used to prate about Marx's theory of value and Lassalle's Iron Law of Wages as if it were still 1870. In spite of Henry George, no Socialist seemed to have any working knowledge of the theory of economic rent: its application to skilled labour was so unheard of that the expression 'rent of ability' was received with laughter when the Fabians first introduced it into their lectures and discussions; and as for the modern theory of value, it was scouted as a blasphemy against Marx. . . . As to history, we had a convenient stock of imposing generalizations about the evolution from slavery to serfdom and from serfdom to free wage labour. We drew our pictures of society with one broad line dividing the *bourgeoisie* from the proletariat, and declared that there were only two classes really in the country. We gave lightning sketches of the development of the mediæval craftsman into the manufacturer and finally into the factory hand. We denounced Malthusianism quite as crudely as the Malthusians advocated it, which is saying a great deal, and we raged against emigration, national insurance, co-operation, trade-unionism, old-fashioned Radicalism, and everything else that was not Socialism; and that, too, without knowing at all clearly what we meant by Socialism. The mischief was, not that our generalizations were unsound, but that we had no detailed knowledge of the content of them: we had borrowed them ready-made as articles of faith; and when opponents like Charles Bradlaugh asked us for details we sneered at the demand without being in the least able to comply with it. The real reason why Anarchist and Socialist worked then shoulder

a shoulder as comrades and brothers was that neither one
 or the other had any definite idea of what he wanted, or
 how it was to be got. All this is true to this day of the
 raw recruits of the movement, and of some older hands
 who may be absolved on the ground of invincible igno-
 rance; but it is no longer true of the leaders of the move-
 ment in general. In 1887 even the British Association burst
 out laughing at one man when an elderly representative of
 Philosophic Radicalism, with the air of one who was utter-
 ing the safest of platitudes, accused us of ignorance of
 political economy; and now not even a Philosophical Rad-
 ical is to be found to make himself ridiculous in this way.
 The exemplary eye opening of Mr. Leonard Courtney by
 Mr. Sidney Webb lately in the leading English economic
 review surprised nobody, except perhaps Mr. Courtney
 himself. The cotton lords of the north would never dream
 to-day of engaging an economist to confute us with
 learned pamphlets as their predecessors engaged Nassau
 Senior in the days of the 'Ten Hours' Bill, because they
 know that we should be only too glad to advertise our
 'Eight Hours' Bill by flattening out any such champion.
 From 1887 to 1889 we were the recognized bullies and
 washbucklers of advanced economics." *

at without reason have the Fabians been called the Jesuits
 of Socialist evangel in England. The "waiting" of the
 Fabian motto is synonymous, not with inaction, but with un-
 weary energy.† The Fabians eschewed pleasures and recre-
 ations of every kind in favour of public speaking and public
 action; their policy has always been one of education and
 action. In the year ending April, 1889, to take a single
 example, the number of lectures delivered by members of the
 Fabian Society alone was upwards of seven hundred. In addi-

Fabian Tract No. 41, pages 15-16; date, 1897.

the Fabian motto, suggested by Mr. Frank Podmore, runs: "For the
 moment you must wait, as Fabius did most patiently when warring
 against Hannibal, though many censured his delays; but when the time
 comes you must strike hard, as Fabius did, or your waiting will be in vain
 fruitless."

tion to writing or editing many publications of the Fabian Society, Shaw has delivered, in the last twenty odd years, considerably more than a thousand public lectures and addresses. Until the close of 1889, the Fabians had confined their propagandist campaign to three directions: publication of manifestos and pamphlets; delivery of public addresses and holding of conferences, and exciting efforts towards the permeation of the Liberal party. In December, 1889, the Fabian Society published the well-known book, *Fabian Essays in Socialism*, edited by Shaw, and containing, in addition to two essays of his own, essays by Sidney Olivier, William Clarke, Hubert Bland, Sidney Webb, Annie Besant and Graham Wallas.* The authors, constituting the Executive Council of the Fabian Society, made no claim to be more than communicative learners: the book was the outcome of their realization of the lack of anything like authoritative, and at the same time popular, presentations of the political, economic, and moral aspects of contemporary Socialism.

In general, it may be said that the Fabians, while strenuously avowing themselves strict evolutionists, are in reality highly revolutionary. The boast of the Fabian Society is freedom from the illusions and millennial aspirations of the great mass of Socialists. It is a society of irreverence and scientific iconoclasm, howling to the fetishism neither of George nor of Marx. Towards Marx and Lassalle, some of whose views must now be discarded as erroneous or obsolete, the Fabian Society insists on the necessity of maintaining as critical an attitude as these eminent Socialists themselves maintained towards their predecessors St. Simon and Robert Owen. In origin anarchistic and revolutionary as could be desired, in spirit the Fabians remain anarchistic and revolutionary. In principle avowedly orderly and constitutional, in policy frankly opportunist, in practice strictly scientific and economic, the Fabians may be called the realists of the Socialist movement. They have ruthlessly snatched the masks from the faces of the Utopian

* This book has now gone into its seventieth thousand, and has been republished in both Germany and America. It is regarded to-day as the standard text in English for Socialist lecturers and propagandists.

EDITED BY G. BERNARD SHAW.

PRICE ONE SHILLING.

SOCIALISM

FABIAN

ESSAYS

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WALTER SCOTT
24 WARWICK LANE

Essays by G. Bernard Shaw, Sydney Olivier, Wm. Clarke,
Hubert Bland, Sidney Webb, Annie Besant, G. Wallas.

FACSIMILE OF COVER DESIGN OF FABIAN ESSAYS (1900).

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dreamers and romancers.* While the rank and file of the "S. D. F." have been the very good friends of the Fabians, the radical differences in their respective policies have precluded all possibility of amalgamation. As succinctly stated by Shaw: "The Fabian Society is a society for helping to bring about the socialization of the industrial resources of the country. The Social-Democratic Federation is a society for enlisting the whole proletariat of the country in its own ranks and itself socializing the national industry." The policy of the one is fundamentally opportunist; of the other, implacably sectarian. The Federation counts no man a Socialist until he has joined it, and supports no man who is not a member; the Fabians advise concentration of strength to elect that candidate, be he Socialist or not, who gives the greatest promise of advancing, in greater or less degree, the general cause of Socialism. The Federation persistently claims to be the only genuine representative of working-class interests in England; the Fabians have never advanced the smallest pretensions in that direction. Its policy finds ample justification in the recent history of Continental Socialism. The tactics of the German Socialist Party, in the last few years, have been "Fabianized" by sheer force of circumstances; to-day, this party is, in great measure, both opportunist and constitutional, the two essential features of Fabian policy. Sharpened in wit by rigorous persecution, Liebknecht and his successor Bebel have learned the art of politics through experience and exigency. In contemporary France is witnessed the signal triumph of Fabian Socialism. The policy of Jaurès, although under the frown of the "International," will be continued in France; and Guëde, despite his barren victory at the International Socialist Congress at Amsterdam in 1904, will remain only *vox clamantis in deserto*. The history of the Fabian Society, which is the history of Shaw, in the last twenty years, bears evidence that the Fabians have stood in the very forefront of the battle for collectivist measures, municipal

* Compare Fabian Tract No. 70: *Report on Fabian Policy*, the bomb-shell thrown by the Fabian Society into the International Socialist Workers' and Trade Union Congress, 1896.

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reforms, civic virtue and social progress. As Shaw wrote in 1900:

"In 1885 we agreed to give up the delightful ease of revolutionary heroics and take to the hard work of practical reform on ordinary parliamentary lines. In 1889 we published 'Fabian Essays' without a word in them about the value theory of Marx. In 1893 we made the first real attack made by Socialists on Liberalism, on which occasion the Social-Democratic Federation promptly joined in the Liberal outcry against us. In 1896 we affirmed that the object of Socialism was not to destroy private enterprise, but only to make the livelihood of the people independent of it by socializing the common industries of life, and driving private enterprise into its proper sphere of art, invention and new departures. This year we have led the way in getting rid of the traditional association of our movement with that romantic nationalism which is to the Pole and the Irishman what Jingoism is to the Englishman. . . . In short, the whole history of Socialism during the past fifteen years in England, France, Germany, Belgium, Austria and America, has been its disentanglement from the Liberal tradition stamped on Marx, Engels and Liebknecht in 1848, and its emergence in a characteristic and original form of its own, modified by national character, and, in England, calling itself Fabianism when it is self-conscious enough to call itself anything at all." *

Strangely enough, in view of all the facts, it is customary to regard Shaw as a purely destructive and negative spirit. The truth is that Shaw stands for certain definite beliefs, certain undoubted principles. His is the belief of the unbeliever, the principle of the unprincipled, the faith of the sceptic.

Not less important than his destructive achievements has been his constructive work in practical affairs as Vestryman and

* *Socialism and Republicanism*, in the *Saturday Review*, November 17th, 1900.

Borough Councillor. Prior to 1895, roughly speaking, the vestries were ignorantly boasted of as the truest products of a representative democratic government. "The truth of the matter," Mr. Shaw once remarked to me, "is that the vestry, as it was actually elected in those days—a few people getting together when nobody knew of it and at some place of which the public was not notified, and electing themselves members—could scarcely be called a representative democratic body. We Socialists finally began to realize that the way to get at the vestry was to put a programme into their hands. So we sent them all a pamphlet, requesting replies—a pamphlet entitled, 'Questions for Vestrymen,' or something of the sort. The vestrymen were thus forced to the wall and driven to decide upon issues. They actually began to make up their minds on many subjects of which hitherto they had had no conception. Slowly the vestries, under this discipline, began to take on a truly representative character. The *personnel* of the vestry was now permanently altered for the better. Men were elected who not only took an interest in municipal affairs, but likewise were willing to do any amount of hard work. I was 'co-opted'—i.e., chosen by the committee, by agreement with the opposite party, obviously beaten if a vote were taken. So that I was fortunate enough to escape the terrors of a popular election."

It is quite beyond the scope of this book to enter into the details of Shaw's work as Vestryman, afterwards Borough Councillor. Suffice it to say, that he was chosen in 1897, entered at once upon the performance of his duties, and prosecuted them for several terms with great zeal and tireless energy. His various letters to the Press during that period, and occasional reminiscences, show that he was always outspoken and vehement in behalf of all reforms which tended to the betterment of the poorer classes, equalization of public privileges of men and women, better sanitary conditions, and the municipalization of such industries as promise to give the people at large better service and greater value for their money than privately operated concerns. The most tangible result of his work as Vestryman and Borough Councillor is his book, *Municipal*

Trading, which he once told me he regarded as one of the best and most useful things he had ever done.*

At the expiration of his career as Borough Councillor, he stood as the candidate for the Borough of St. Pancras in the London County Council—the seat afterwards occupied by the well-known actor, Mr. George Alexander. “I was beaten,” Mr. Shaw recently told me, “because I alienated the Nonconformist element by favouring the improvement of the Church schools. I was convinced that such improvement would lead to the betterment of the education of the children. The Nonconformists were enraged beyond measure by the proposal, looking with the utmost horror upon any measure which tended to strengthen the Church. I remember one rabid Nonconformist coming to me one day, almost foaming at the mouth, and protesting with violent indignation that he would not pay a single cent towards the maintenance of the schools of the Established Church. ‘Why, my dear fellow,’ I replied, ‘don’t you know that you pay taxes now for the support of the Roman Catholic Church in the Island of Malta?’ Although this staggered the irate Nonconformist for the moment, it did not reconcile his element to the extension of the principle to London. My contention was that under the conditions prevailing at the time, the children were poorly taught and poorly housed, the schools badly ventilated, and the conditions generally unsatisfactory. ‘Improve all the conditions,’ I said; ‘appoint your own inspectors, and in the course of time you will control the situation. Pay the piper and you can call the tune.’ But I could not override the tremendous prejudice against the Church, and I was badly beaten.” One of Shaw’s intimate friends told me not long ago that what lost the seat in the L. C. C. for Shaw was his intrepid assertion, repeated throughout the campaign, that he and Voltaire were the only two truly religious people who had ever lived! Shaw’s

* For highly appreciative summaries of *The Common Sense of Municipal Trading* (Archibald Constable and Co.), and of Shaw’s article, *Nationalism for Millionaires* (first published in the *Contemporary Review* of February, 1896, and afterwards, in 1901, as *Falsian Tract No. 107*), compare Mr. Holbrook Jackson’s monograph, *Reverend Shaw*, pages 114-131.

own account of this, when I taxed him with it, was that he had often pointed out that the religious opinions of the Free Churches (the Nonconformist sects) in England to-day were exactly those of Voltaire, and that what I had been told was quite as near his meaning as most people contrived to get without reading him. And only the other day a well known politician and a friend of Shaw's made the remark to me that Shaw was an "impossible political candidate," too rash and individualistic in his assertions to avoid alienating many people—even some of the very men who under ordinary circumstances might confidently be relied upon to support a progressive and energetic reformer.

And yet it is noteworthy that as far back as the year 1889 Shaw was asked to stand as a Member of Parliament. Below is given the text of a letter, from Shaw, at 29, Fitzroy Square, W., London, dated March 23rd, 1889, to Mr. W. Sanders, then Secretary of the Election Committee of the Battersea branch of the S. D. F., now a prominent Fabian and recently member of the London County Council. This letter, a copy of which was most kindly given me by Mr. Sanders, was sent in reply to a letter from him to Mr. Shaw asking him to allow his name to be put forward as a candidate for the parliamentary representation of Battersea subsequent to a conference between the Battersea L. and R. Association and the Battersea branch of the S. D. F. Mr. Shaw was mistaken in addressing Mr. Sanders as the Secretary of the Election Committee of the Battersea L. and R. Association.

"DEAR SIR,—

"I wish it were possible for me to thank the Battersea L. and R. Association for their invitation, and accept it without further words. But there is the old difficulty which makes genuine democracy impossible at present—I mean the money difficulty. For the last year I have had to neglect my professional duties so much, and to be so outrageously unpunctual and uncertain in the execution of work entrusted to me by employers of literary labour,

that my pecuniary position is worse than it was; and I am at present almost wholly dependent on critical work which requires my presence during several evenings in the week at public performances. Badly as I do this at present, I could not do it at all if I had parliamentary duties to discharge; and as to getting back any of the old work that could be done in the morning, I rather think the action I should be bound to take in Parliament would lead to closer and closer boycotting. As to the serious literary work that is independent of editors and politics, I have never succeeded in making it support me; and in any case it is not compatible with energetic work in another direction carried on simultaneously. You must excuse my troubling you with these details; but the Association, consisting of men who know what getting a living means, will understand the importance of them. As a political worker outside Parliament I can just manage to pay my way and so keep myself straight and independent. But you know, and the Association will know, how a man goes to pieces when he has to let his work go, and then to run into debt, to borrow in order to get out of debt by getting into it again, to beg in order to pay off the loans, and finally either to sell himself or to give up, beaten.

"If the constituency wants a candidate, I see nothing for it but paying him. If Battersea makes up its mind to that, it can pick and choose among men many of whom are stronger than I. And since it is well to get so much good value for the money as can be had, I think poor constituencies (and all real democratic constituencies are poor) will for some time be compelled to kill two birds with one stone, and put the same man into both County Council and Parliament. This, however, is a matter which you are sure to know your own minds about, and it is not for me to meddle in it.

"Some day, perhaps, I may be better able to take an extra duty; for, after all, I am not a bad workman when I have time and opportunity to show what I can do; and I need scarcely say that if the literary employers find that

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there is money to be made out of me, they will swallow my opinions fast enough,

"I am, dear Sir,

"Yours faithfully,

"G. BERNARD SHAW.

"Mr. W. Sanders."

In many quarters, even among his Socialist *confrères*, Bernard Shaw is regarded as primarily destructive in his proposals. And yet, at different times and in various places, he has constructively outlined his programme of complete Socialism. In essential agreement with such Collectivists as Émile Vandervelde, Jean Jaurès and August Bebel, Shaw differs from them only in regard to the successive mutations in the process of Socialist evolution. The gradual extension of the principle of the income tax—*e.g.*, a "forcible transfer of rent, interest, and even rent of ability from private holders to the State, without compensation," is the scheme of capitalistic expropriation the Collectivists have in mind. By a gradual process of development, the imposition of gradually increased taxes, the State will secure the means for investment in industrial enterprises of all sorts. Instead of forcibly extinguishing private enterprises, the State would extinguish them by successfully competing against them. Thus, as Proudhon said, competition would kill competition; in America, Mr. Gaylord Wilshire never tires of exclaiming: "Let the Nation own the Trusts." If, as Shaw claims, the highest exceptional talent could be had, in the open market, for eight hundred pounds, say, nearly half the existing wages of ability and the entire profits of capital would be diverted from the pockets of the able men and the present possessors of capital, and would find its way into the pockets of the State. The vast sum thus accruing to the State would swell the existing wages fund, and would be employed in raising the wages of the entire community. After the means of production have been Socialized, and the State has become the employer, products or riches will be distributed roughly, "according to the labour

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validity of the economics which furnish the substructure of *Fabian Essays*.* Mr. Mallock's contention resolves itself into the assertion that exceptional personal ability, and not labour, is the main factor in the production of wealth. Far from repudiating this assertion, Shaw embraced it, he said, in the spirit of Mrs. Prig: "Who deniges of it, Betsy?" We support and encourage ability, Shaw contends, in order that we may get as much as possible out of it, not in order that it may get as much as possible out of us. Give men of ability and their heirs the entire product of their ability, so that they shall be enormously rich whilst the rest of us remain as poor as if they had never existed, and "it will become a public duty to kill them, since nobody but themselves will be any the worse, and we shall be much the better for having no further daily provocation to the sin of envy." Accordingly, the business of Society is "to get the use of ability as cheaply as it can for the benefit of the community, giving the able man just enough advantage to keep his ability active and efficient. From the Unsociologist point of view this is simply saying that it is the business of Society to find out exactly how far it can rob the able man of the product of his ability without injuring itself, which is precisely true (from that point of view)," though whether it is a "reduction of Socialism to dishonesty or of Unsociology to absurdity" may be left an open question. "If Mr. Mallock will take his grand total of the earnings of Ability," Shaw asserts, "and strike off from it, first, all rent of land and interest on capital, then all normal profits, then all

* *Fabian Economics*, in the *Fortnightly Review*, February, 1894. Mr. Mallock purposed to show how the defenders of a broad and social Conservatism, as outlined by himself, "may be able, by a fuller understanding of it, to speak to the intellect, the heart, and the hopes of the people of this country (England), like the voice of a trumpet, in comparison with which the voice of Socialism will be merely a penny whistle." Shaw delightfully termed his rejoinder, *On Mr. Mallock's Proposed Trumpet Performance*, which brought forth, in the same magazine, not one, but two rejoinders from Mr. Mallock. In 1909 an attack by Mr. Mallock on Mr. Keir Hardie in the *Times* provoked Shaw to a fierce onslaught on his old opponent, and the Fabian Society presently republished the correspondence and the old *Fortnightly* article under the title, *Socialism and Superior Men*. The latter, in a shilling edition, is also published by A. C. Fifield, London, in the *Fabian Socialist Series*.

non-competitive emoluments attached to a definite status in the public service, civil or military, from royalty downwards, then all payments for the advantages of secondary or technical education and social opportunities, then all fancy payments made to artists and other professional men by very rich commonplace people competing for their services, and then all exceptional payments made to men whose pre-eminence exists only in the imaginative ignorance of the public, the remainder may with some plausibility stand as genuine rent of ability." And to Mr. Mallock's assertion that "men of ability will not exert themselves to produce income when they know that the State is an organized conspiracy to rob them of it," Shaw characteristically retorts, "Mr. Mallock might as well deny the existence of the Pyramids on the general ground that men will not build pyramids when they know that Pharaoh is at the head of an organized conspiracy to take away the Pyramids from them as soon as they are made."

Shaw holds the fundamentally sound view that "as to the entire assimilation of Socialism by the world, the world has never yet assimilated the whole of any ism, and never will." In that most subtle and distinguished of all his contributions to the Socialist literature of our time, *The Illusions of Socialism*, Shaw has expressed his firm conviction that it is not essential for the welfare of the world to carry out Socialism in its entirety. Unfettered by the dogmas of a political creed, unhampered by the bonds of a narrow partisanship, Bernard Shaw stands forth as a great and free spirit in his prophetic declaration that, long before it has penetrated to all corners of the political and social organization, Socialism will have relieved the pressure to which it owes its elasticity, and will recede before the next great social movement, leaving everywhere intact the best survivals of individualistic liberalism. And far from agreeing with Ibsen in his impossibilist declaration that the State must go, Shaw not only asserts that we must put up with the State, but also expresses no doubt whatsoever that under Social-Democracy the few will still govern. It is a mark of Shaw's British practicality and clear-sightedness that he recognizes in the State a practical instrumentality for effecting

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and directing social reform. The State is indispensable as a means for making possible one great consummation: the development of the strong, sound, creative personality. The unsocial man he regards as a "hopelessly private person." The opportunity for the free development of the individual he regards as the fundamental prerequisite and condition for the individual's social and material wellbeing.* "That great joint-stock company of the future, the Social Democratic State, will have its chairman and directors as surely as its ships will have captains." But this admission involves no endorsement, on Shaw's part, of the State as at present constituted. "Bakounine's comprehensive aspiration to destroy all States and Established Churches, with their religious, political, judicial, financial, criminal, academic, economic and social laws and institutions, seems to me perfectly justifiable and intelligible from the point of view of the ordinary 'educated man,' who believes that institutions make men instead of men making institutions." The State, as at present constituted, Shaw views as simply a huge machine for robbing and slave driving the poor by brute force. While he laughs at the Individualism expressed in Herbert Spencer's *The Coming Slavery*, at the Anarchy expressed in the word *Liberty*, and in those "silly words" of John Hay on the title-page of Benjamin Tucker's paper, Shaw is, nevertheless, both an individualist and an intellectual anarchist. The alleged opposition between Socialism and Individualism, Shaw has always strenuously maintained, is false and question-begging. "The true issue lies between Socialism and Unsocialism, and not between Socialism and that instinct in us that leads us to Socialism by its rebellion against the squalid levelling down, the brutal repression, the regimenting and drilling and conventionalizing of the great mass of us to-day, in order that a lucky handful may bore themselves to death for want of anything to do, and be afraid to walk down Bond Street without a regulation hat and coat on." Like Ruskin, Morris and

* In his analysis of the situation in his native land, he insisted that Home Rule was a necessity for Ireland, because the Irish would never be content, would never feel themselves free, until Home Rule was granted them.

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Kropotkin, Shaw sees the whole imposture through and through, "in spite of its familiarity, and of the illusions created by its temporal power, its riches, its splendour, its prestige, its intense respectability, its unremitting piety, and its high moral pretension."

At bottom, it was a deeply religious, a fundamentally humanitarian motive, which drew Shaw into Socialism. The birth of the social passion in his soul finds its origin in the individual desire to compass the salvation of his fellow man. A burning sense of social injustice, a great passion for social reform, directed his steps. In his inmost being he felt his complicity in the social ills of the world. He realized that only by personally seeking to effect the salvation of society could he achieve the salvation of his own soul. The Will to Socialism was thus grounded in a profound individualism: he felt their organic connection. Socialism was the need of the age; and it could only be achieved through the freedom and development of the individual.

That other wit and paradoxer, Mr. Gilbert Chesterton, told the very truth itself when he said that Bernard Shaw "has done something that has never been done in the world before. He has become a revolutionist without becoming a sentimentalist. He has revolted against the cant of authority, and yet continued in despising the cant of revolt." To Shaw, the middle-class origin of the Socialist movement is in nothing so apparent as in the persistent delusions of Socialists as to an ideal proletariat, forced by the brutalities of the capitalist into an unwilling acquiescence in war, penal codes, and other cruelties of civilization. "They still see the social problem," Shaw wittily remarks, "not sanely and objectively, but imaginatively, as the plot of a melodrama, with its villain and its heroine, its innocent beginning, troubled middle, and happy ending. They are still the children and the romancers of politics." *

Shaw finds a sort of sly gratification in the reflection that the world is becoming so familiar with the Socialist, that it no longer fears, but only laughs at him. "I, the Socialist, am

* *Socialism at the International Congress, in Cernopolis, September, 1896.*

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no longer a Red Spectre. I am only a ridiculous fellow. Good: I embrace the change. It puts the world with me. . . . All human progress involves, as its first condition, the willingness of the pioneer to make a fool of himself. The sensible man is the man who adapts himself to existing conditions. The fool is the man who persists in trying to adapt the conditions to himself. Both extremes have their disadvantages. I cling to my waning folly as a corrective to my waxing good sense as anxiously as I once nursed my good sense to defend myself against my folly." Shaw is the very man of whom his own Don Juan said: "He can only be enslaved whilst he is spiritually weak enough to listen to reason."

THE ART CRITIC

"Produce me your best critic, and I will criticise his head off."—*On Diabolonian Ethics. In Three Plays for Puritans.* Preface, p. xxi.



CHAPTER VII

SHAW'S career as a critic dates from the period of his first acquaintance with Mr. William Archer, in 1885. After living for nine years, according to his own story, on the six pounds of which he is so fond of speaking, Shaw was at last reduced to quite straitened financial circumstances. He eagerly seized the opportunity to become a critic afforded him by Mr. Archer's ingenious kindness. "Our friend, William Archer," Shaw relates, "troubled by this state of things, to which the condition of my wardrobe bore convincing testimony, rescued me by a stratagem. Being already famous as the 'W. A.' of the *World's* drama, he boldly offered to criticize pictures as well. Edmund Yates was only too glad to get so excellent a critic. Archer got me to do the work, resigned the post as soon as I had got firm hold of it, and left me in possession." The years from 1885 to 1889, during which he lived at 29, Fitzroy Square, Shaw devoted in part to criticism of art, contemporary English art in particular; during this period, he once told me, he criticized every picture show in London. He also published many unsigned literary reviews and sallies in the *Pall Mall Gazette*; whilst a number of his criticisms of pictures appeared in unsigned paragraphs, both in the *World*, 1885 to 1888, and in *Truth*, 1889. A few of his *critiques* also appeared in a magazine called *Our Corner*.

I recently read Shaw's critical reviews of this period, especially the complete file of his articles in the *Pall Mall Gazette* from May 16th, 1885, to August 31st, 1888, placed at my disposal by Mr. Shaw. The articles are pertinent and shrewd, but only comparatively few are marked by that peculiar and fantastic humour which has come to be known as Shavian. They embrace every sort of subject from Ouida's novels to the *Life of Madame Blavatsky*, from Grant Allen to W. Stanley Jevons, from Cairo to the Surrey Hills - art, fiction, music, drama,

"Same old game." And we feel sure that Shaw will "gore and trample" the unfortunate wretches who called forth the damning comments—"wheels awful," "idiotic," and "green blush and pasty face."

During these years, however, from 1885 to 1888 in especial, Socialism was the living centre of all Shaw's interests. His time was principally devoted to the most active form of Socialist propagandism. The literary articles of this period do not possess the piquant interest of the "C. di B." or the "G. B. S." criticisms, which are quite remarkable for epigram, satire, and paradox. Most of them are almost unintelligible now that they can no longer be read with the context of the events of the week in which they appeared. Shaw has always been a leader of forlorn hopes; at this time, willy nilly, he was on the side of the majority. I remember one day quoting Clarence Rook's remark to the effect that Shaw is like the kite, and can rise only when the *popularis aura* is against him. "No, that is a radical mistake," Mr. Shaw said forcibly. "I have never worked with the sense that everybody is against me. On the contrary, my inspiration springs from a sense of sympathy with my views." Still, one might say that it has always been as a defiant and vexatious personality that Shaw has best succeeded in arousing and challenging clamorous protest. Hermann Bahr insists that Bernard Shaw possesses in rich measure the remarkable and exceptional talent of the great artist-critic: the ability to arouse the whole state, the whole nation, against him. Not only was that opposition, which is the very breath of his nostrils, non-existent: there was no great battle on in the world of art in London comparable to those that were yet to be waged. It is true that the Impressionist movement was struggling for life in London, and while Shaw defended it vigorously, neither its day nor his day was yet come. As an almost totally unknown, comparatively unskilled critic of literature and art, he could scarcely be expected to create the unparalleled sensations which he subsequently achieved as a Shakespearean image-breaker, a champion of Wagner and Ibsen, and the most radical exponent of the newest forms of the New Drama.

And yet it was during these very years that he developed those remarkable qualities which have won him the title of the most brilliant of contemporary British journalistic critics. On all sides the younger generation, which included Mr. Shaw as one of its most daring and iconoclastic members, rose up in revolt against academicism in style. The New Journalism came into being. "Lawless young men," says Shaw, "began to write and print the living English language of their own day instead of the prose style of one of Macaulay's characters named Addison. They split their infinitives and wrote such phrases as 'a man nobody ever heard of,' instead of, 'a man of whom nobody had ever heard'; or, more classical still, 'a writer hitherto unknown.' Musical critics, instead of reading books about their business and elegantly regurgitating their erudition, began to listen to music and to distinguish between sounds; critics of painting began to look at pictures; critics of the drama began to look at something besides the stage; and descriptive writers actually broke into the House of Commons, elbowing the reporters into the background, and writing about political leaders as if they were mere play-actors. The interview, the illustration, and the cross heading hitherto looked on as American vulgarities impossible to English literary gentlemen, invaded all our papers; and, finally, as the climax and masterpiece of literary Jacobinism, the *Saturday Review* appeared with a signed article in it. Then Mr. Traill and all his generation covered their faces with their togas and died at the base of Addison's statue, which all the while ran ink." "Don't misunderstand my position," Mr. Shaw once remarked to me. "It is true that I was opposed to academicism in style, not to style itself. I believe in style. I thought that the academicism we had was not good academicism. I was pedantic enough myself when I first began to write—when I wrote my first novel. Afterwards I came to the conclusion that a phrase meant much only after it had been washed into shape in the mouths of dozens of generations. The fact of the matter is that I am extremely sensitive to the *form* of art." Shaw simply repudiated the classical tradition of writing like "a scholar and a gentleman." As far as his scholarship was con-

cerned, he took the greatest pains to dissemble the little possessed. Moreover, he doubted if it had ever been so while being a "gentleman," and used every means in his power to discredit this antiquated survival of the age of sentimentalism. He always aimed at accuracy, but scoffed consummately at the notion of achieving "justice" in criticism. "I am God Almighty," he said in effect, "and nobody but a fool can expect justice from me, or any other superhuman attribute. He wrote boldly according to his bent; he said only what he wanted to say, and not what he thought he ought to say, what was right, or what was just. To Shaw, this affected, manufactured, artificial conscience of morality and justice of no use in the writing of genuine criticism, or in the making of true works of art. For that, he felt that one must have the real conscience that gives a man courage to fulfil his duty by saying what he likes. An epigram I once heard him make: "Accuracy only means discovering the relation of your words to facts instead of cooking the facts to save trouble." This is a note of his entire criticism. Shaw sought simply to write accurately, as frankly, as vividly, and as lightly as possible. He hesitated neither at violating taste, nor at being vexatious, even positively disagreeable. "If I meet an American tourist who is greatly impressed with the works of Raphael, Kaulbach, Delaroche and Barry," he once said, "and I, with Titian, Velasquez in my mind, tell him that not one of his four heroes was a real painter, I am no doubt putting my case absurdly, but I am not talking nonsense, for all that: indeed, to the adept acerb of pictures I am only formulating a commonplace in an irritatingly ill-considered way. But in this world if you do not say a thing in an irritating way, you may just as well not say it at all, since nobody will trouble themselves about anything that does not trouble them."

Mr. H. M. Hyndman, the great English Socialist, once told me that he was really the first person in England to discredit Shaw. "In 1883," he explained, "I wrote a letter of recommendation for Shaw to Frederick Greenwood, at that time editor of the *Pall Mall Gazette*. The letter led to nothing, is true; but that is not material. The point is, that in the

letter I compared Shaw to Heine—a comparison for which I have been unmercifully chaffed many times since. Of course, Shaw does not possess Heine's wonderful gift of lyricism; but as iconoclastic critics, they have many qualities in common. In his power to turn up for our inspection the seamy side of the robe of modern life, and make us recoil at the sight, Bernard Shaw is without a peer.

"I have always been inclined to class Bernard Shaw and my dear friend George Meredith together. In enigmatic character and faculty of mystification as to their real opinion, they are remarkably alike."

Of Shaw, in all his criticism, might be quoted his own words descriptive of George Henry Lewes as a critic of the drama: "He expressed his most laboured criticisms with a levity which gave them the air of being the unpremeditated whimsicalities of a man who had perversely taken to writing about the theatre for the sake of the jest latent in his own outrageous unfitness for it."

If the world is convinced that Shaw is only a gay deceiver, he himself has felt from the very beginning that the *rôle* he plays is that of the candid friend of society. "Waggery as a medium is invaluable," he once explained. "My case is really the case of Rabelais over again. When I first began to promulgate my opinions, I found that they appeared extravagant, and even insane. In order to get a hearing, it was necessary for me to attain the footing of a privileged lunatic, with the licence of a jester. Fortunately the matter was very easy. I found that I had only to say with perfect simplicity what I seriously meant just as it struck me, to make everybody laugh. My method, you will have noticed, is to take the utmost trouble to find the right thing to say, and then say it with the utmost levity. And all the time the real joke is that I am in earnest." It is Shaw's supreme distinction that he refuses to view life through the confining, beclouding medium of convention. His primal claim to serious attention is based upon the assertion of his freedom from illusion. If he appears grotesque and eccentric, it is not so much because he expresses himself grotesquely and eccentrically: it is primarily because he scruti-

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nizes life with a more aquiline eyesight than that of the illuded majority. His levity has saved him from martyrdom; for, although it is a very difficult thing to speak disagreeable truths, it is a still more difficult thing to listen to them. Recall the treatment the British public gave to George Moore for his advocacy of realism, to Vizetelly for his championing of Zola, even to Shaw himself for his defence of Ibsen! Shaw has based all his brilliancy and solidity, Mr. Chesterton acutely observes, upon the hackneyed, but yet forgotten, fact that truth is stranger than fiction. And Shaw himself has cleverly put the case in his own paradoxical way. "There is an indescribable levity—not triviality mind, but levity something spritelike about the final truth of a matter; and this exquisite levity communicates itself to the style of a writer who will face the labour of digging down to it. It is the half-truth which is congruous, heavy, serious, and suggestive of a middle-aged or elderly philosopher. The whole truth is often the first thing that comes into the head of a fool or a child; and when a wise man forces his way to it through the many strata of his sophistications, its wanton, perverse air reassures him instead of frightening him." *

This spritelike quality, this indescribable levity inherent in the final truth of a matter, has communicated itself to Shaw's style in the most intimate way. With the not unnatural result that it is difficult for the average man to believe that opinions advanced with such light-hearted levity carry any of the weight of final truth. It is for this reason that all of Shaw's attempts to write genuine autobiography have been greeted with the most amiable scepticism. Shaw himself is able to speak with more confidence on the folly of writing scientific natural history, because he has tried the experiment, within certain timid limits, of being candidly autobiographical.

"I have produced no permanent impression," he declares, "because nobody has ever believed me. I once told

a brilliant London journalist * some facts about my family, running to forty-first cousins and to innumerable seconds and thirds. Like most large families, it did not consist exclusively of teetotallers, nor did all its members remain until death up to the very moderate legal standard of sanity. One of them discovered an absolutely original method of committing suicide. It was simple to the verge of triteness, yet no human being had ever thought of it before. It was also amusing. But in the act of carrying it out, my relative jammed the mechanism of his heart—possibly in the paroxysm of laughter which the mere narration of his suicidal method has never since failed to provoke—and if I may be allowed to state the result in my Irish way, he died a second before he succeeded in killing himself. The coroner's jury found that he died 'from natural causes'; and the secret of the suicide was kept not only from the public, but from most of the family.

"I revealed the secret in private conversation to the brilliant journalist aforesaid. He shrieked with laughter and printed the whole story in his next *causerie*. It never for a moment occurred to him that it was true. To this day he regards me as the most reckless liar in London."

Had Shaw ever attempted to write the Rougon-Macquart history of his family in twenty volumes, along the candid lines of the above narrative, it is not improbable that he would thereafter have been permanently and forcibly deprived of his privileges as a lunatic. "I have not yet ascertained the truth about myself," he wrote some years ago. "For instance, am I mad or sane? I really do not know. Doubtless, I am clever in certain directions; my talent has enabled me to cut a figure in my profession in London. But a man may, like Don Quixote, be clever enough to cut a figure and yet be stark mad. A critic recently described me, with deadly acuteness, as having 'a kindly dislike of my fellow-creatures.' Perhaps dread

* Mr. A. B. Walkley, Mr. Shaw lately told me.

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would have been nearer the mark than dislike; for man is the only animal of which I am thoroughly and cravenly afraid. I have never thought much of the courage of a lion tamer. Inside the cage he is at least safe from other men. There is not much harm in a lion. He has no ideals, no religion, no politics, no chivalry, no gentility; in short, no reason for destroying anything that he does not want to eat. In the late war, the Americans burnt the Spanish fleet, and finally had to drag men out of hulls that had become furnaces. The effect of this on one of the American commanders was to make him assemble his men and tell them that he believed in God Almighty. No lion would have done that. On reading it and observing that the newspapers, representing normal public opinion, seemed to consider it a very creditable, natural and impressively pious incident, I came to the conclusion that I must be mad. At all events, if I am sane, the rest of the world ought not to be at large. We cannot both see things as they really are."

It was at a somewhat later time that the critics came to treat Shaw as a reckless liar and a privileged lunatic. At this period, he impressed the self-conscious literary clique as a witty, but frivolous, ignoramus, totally incompetent to discuss the high subjects of which he professed such penetrating comprehension. I once had an interesting discussion with Mr. Shaw about the subject of his slippancy. "Do you accept as just the criticism, made in some quarters," I asked Mr. Shaw, "that you and Whistler were very much alike in your attitude towards the general public?"

"Not at all, that is a crude error," replied Mr. Shaw earnestly. "Whistler came to grief because he gave himself up to clever smartness, which is abhorrent to the average Englishman. As for me, I have never for a moment lost sight of my serious relation to a serious public. You see, I had an advantage over Whistler in any case, for at least three times every week I could escape from artistic and literary stuff, and talk seriously on serious subjects to serious people. For this reason—because I persisted in Socialist propagandism—I never once lost touch with the real world."

Shaw's *critiques*, *sallics*, and reviews were the combination of

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a laborious criticism with a recklessly flippant manner. Into literature he carried the methods he adopted on the platform, where he tossed off the most diligently acquired, studiously pondered information with all the *insouciance* of omniscience. As a critic, Shaw has ever laboured for the scanty wages of the "intolerable fatigue of thought." In characteristic style, he has gone so far as to declare that good journalism is much rarer and more important than good literature; he has no sympathy with Disraeli's view of a critic as an author who has failed. "I know as one who has practised both crafts," wrote Shaw in 1892, "that authorship is child's play compared to criticism; and I have, you may depend upon it, my full share of the professional instinct which regards the romancer as a mere adventurer in literature and the critic as a highly skilled workman. Ask any novelist or dramatist whether he can write a better novel or play than I; and he will blithely say 'Yes.' Ask him to take my place as critic for one week; and he will blench from the task. The truth is that the critic stands between popular authorship, for which he is not silly enough, and great authorship, for which he is not genius enough." *

While Mr. Shaw was laboriously striving to impart lightness and *insouciance* to his literary style, and to acquire careless *sang-froid* as a platform speaker, he was likewise making the acquaintance of certain distinguished men of his day. His relation and association with William Morris, for example, exercised no noteworthy influence upon his art; but it certainly did no less than accentuate certain distinct traits of his character. Unmistakably, in this way, does this association serve to give us a clearer insight into the *rationale* of Shaw's popularly-called—idiosyncrasies. On the other hand, it furnishes us a new aspect of Morris from the Shavian point of view.

Readers of the authorized edition of *Cashel Byron's Profession* will recall that William Morris, who, like Shaw, had thrown himself into the Socialist revival of the early eighties, first

* *The Author to the Dramatic Critics*, Appendix I to the first edition of *Widowers' Houses*. London, Henry and Co., Bouverie Street, E.C., 1893.

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became curious about Shaw through reading the monthly instalments of *An Unsocial Socialist* as they appeared in the Socialist magazine *To-Day*. Shaw had heard of Morris, to be sure; and had even, years before, once seen him of all places in the world!—in the Doré Gallery. Yet his notions about Morris were, in reality, of the vaguest. He knew nothing beyond the meagre facts that he was a poet, that he belonged to the Rossetti circle, and that he was associated with Burne-Jones and with what was then called Estheticism. He had never read a line of Morris's, and, in fact, had taken no definite measure of his calibre. This was the situation when Shaw found himself one evening in Gatti's big restaurant in the Strand at the table with Morris and H. M. Hyndman. Morris belonged to Mr. Hyndman's society, the Democratic Federation, now the Social-Democratic Federation, while Mr. Hyndman himself was the head centre of London Socialism. With naïve simplicity, Morris humbly announced that he was prepared to do whatever he was told and go wherever he was led; that was all he could say. In a letter to me describing the interview, written many years afterwards, Mr. Shaw said that, while it was only snap-judgment—a personal impression across the table—he could not help being “privately tickled by this announcement from an obviously ungovernable man who was too big to be led by any of us.”

In ignorance concerning Morris, Shaw was not alone: the other Socialists were in precisely the same predicament. Morris himself said afterwards that it was among his Socialist *confrères* that he first realized he was an elderly duffer. His old Rossettian associates used to call him ‘Topay’; but, as readers of Lady Burne-Jones's *Memorials* will recall, Burne-Jones used to be angry when she applied this embarrassing nickname to Morris before strangers. If Morris was affectionately regarded as a young man by his associates of the “P. R. B.,” to his Socialist allies he looked older than he was—sixty at fifty, though a magnificent sixty—a sort of “sixty-years-young” patriarch. Morris and Shaw, after they settled down to the routine of Socialist agitation, were at the opposite poles of the movement. Shaw headed the Fabian

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Society, while Morris, after his secession from the S. D. F., organized the Socialist League, which shortly went to pieces—because, as Shaw says, there was only one William Morris; he was afterwards the leading spirit in the Hammersmith Socialist Society. Despite this fundamental difference in viewpoint—for Morris's fundamental conceptions were "Equality, Communism, and the rediscovery under Communism of Art as 'work-pleasure,'" whereas Shaw, as a Fabian, aimed simply at the reduction of Socialism to a constitutional political policy—there was never any personal friction between the two. Indeed, they did a great deal of speaking together in the early days, most of it at the street corner, and often thought themselves lucky if they had an audience of twenty. In after years, we find Morris with the broadest of views endeavouring to settle the differences which arose between the various Socialist sects. By 1893, when he gave his well known address entitled *Communism* before the Hammersmith Socialist Society, Morris had acquired an intimate knowledge of the attempt to organize Socialism in England which began in the early eighties. "He had himself undertaken and conducted," writes Shaw, "that part of the experiment which nobody else would face: namely, the discovery and combination, without distinction of class, of all those who were capable of understanding Equality and Communism as he understood it, and their organization as an effective force for the overthrow of the existing order of property and privilege. In doing so he had been brought into contact, and often into conflict, with every other section of the movement. He knew all his men and knew all their methods. He knew that the agitation was exhausted, and that the time had come to deal with the new policy which the agitation had shaken into existence. Accordingly, we find him in this (the above-mentioned) paper, doing what he could to economize the strength of the movement by making peace between its jarring sections, and recalling them from their disputes over tactics and programs to the essentials of their cause." *

* Note of the Editor, G. B. Shaw, of Fabian Tract No. 113: *Communism*—a lecture by William Morris, published by the Fabian Society.

None of Morris' Socialist associates were in the least degree hero-worshippers, at least where he was concerned: they never bothered at all about his eminence. "I was not myself conscious of the impression he had made on me," Mr. Shaw once remarked to me, in explaining his feeling for Morris, "until one evening, at a debating society organized by Stopford Brooke, when Morris, in a speech on Socialism in the course of a debate, astonished me by saying that he left the economics to me—in that respect I regard Shaw as my master." The phrase meant only that he left that side of the case to me as he always did when we campaigned together, but though I knew this, still it gave me a shock which made me aware that I had unconsciously rated him so highly that his complimenter gave me a sort of revulsion." It was genuine modesty which once prompted Shaw to say that he never liked to call himself Morris's friend, because he was too much his junior and too little necessary or serviceable to him in his private affairs. And yet he enjoyed an unstinted and unreserved intercourse with Morris: one of Shaw's best-known Fabian tracts, *The Transition to Social Democracy*, for example, was written at Morris's mediæval manor-house, Lechlade, on the Thames, and was heartily approved on its historical side by that erudite student of the Middle Ages. Shaw once said that no man was more liberal in his attempts to improve Morris's mind than he was, "but I always found that, in so far as I was not making most horrible idiot of myself out of misknowledge (I could forgive myself for pure ignorance), he could afford to listen to me with the patience of a man who had taught my teachers. There were people whom we tried to run him down with—Tennysons, Swinburnes, and so on; but their opinions about things did not make any difference, Morris's did." *

Morris greatly enjoyed a number of Shaw's essays, for the prime reason that in those essays Shaw said certain things which Morris wanted to have said. After Shaw's celebrated reply to Max Nordau, Morris suddenly began to talk to Shaw

* Obituary essay: *Morris as Actor and Dramatist*, in the *Saturday Review*, October 10th, 1896. Reproduced in *Dramatic Opinions and Essays*, Vol. II.

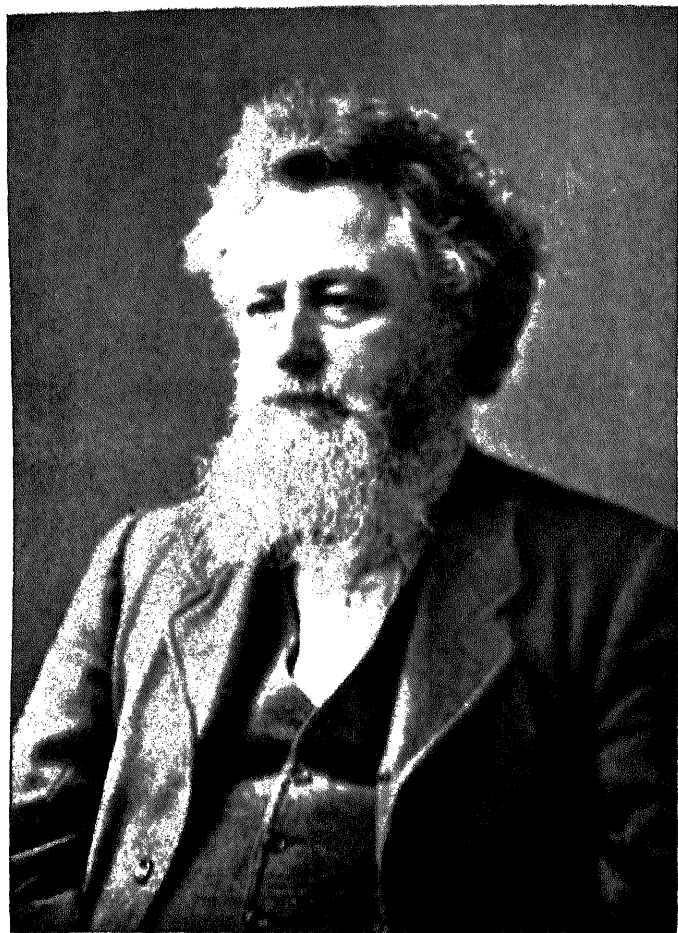


Photo by Elliott & Fry

Wm. Morris, London

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about Whistler and the Impressionists in a way which showed that he knew all about them and what they were driving at, though before that Shaw had given Morris up as—on that subject—an intolerant and ignorant veteran of the pre-Raphaelite movement. That this was highly characteristic of Morris from Shaw's standpoint is evidenced by some paragraphs in Shaw's obituary notice of Morris in the *Saturday Review*. "When an enthusiast for some fashionable movement or reaction in art would force it into the conversation, he (Morris) would often behave so as to convey an impression of invincible prejudice and intolerant ignorance, and so get rid of it. But later on, he would let slip something that showed, in a flash, that he had taken in the whole movement at its very first demonstration, and had neither prejudices nor illusions about it. When you knew the subject yourself, and could see beyond it and around it, putting it in its proper place and accepting its limits, he could talk fast enough about it; but it did not amuse him to allow novices to break a lance with him, because he had no special facility for brilliant critical demonstration, and required too much patience for his work to waste any of it on idle discussions. Consequently there was a certain intellectual roguery about him of which his intimate friends were very well aware; so that if a subject were thrust on him, the aggressor was sure to be ridiculously taken in if he did not calculate on Morris's knowing much more about it than he pretended." He thus often presented himself as imperious and prejudiced, because up to a certain point he would neither agree nor discuss, simply giving you up as walking in darkness. But the moment you had worked your way through the subject and come out on the other side, as Shaw expressed it, Morris would suddenly begin to talk like an expert and show all sorts of knowledge—scientific, political, commercial, intellectual—as opposed to artistic, and so on—that you never suspected him of. "He was fond of quoting Robert Owen's rule: 'Don't argue: repeat your assertion,'" Mr. Shaw recently told me; "and mere debating, which he knew to be an intellectual game and not an essential part of the Will-to-Socialism (as to speak), did not interest him enough to make him good at it. But he

highly enjoyed hearing anyone else do it cleverly on his side and was furious when it was done on the other side. In point of command of modern critical language, he was by no means a ready man; and as I was in great practice just then, he would take a prompt from me (if it was the right one) with as much relief and simplicity as if I had found his spectacles for him."

Shaw once said that, as far as he was aware, he shared with Mr. Henry Arthur Jones the distinction of being the only modern dramatist, except the author of *Charley's Aunt*, which bored Morris, whose plays were witnessed by Morris. Shaw did not pretend to claim Morris's visits as a spontaneous act of homage to modern acting and the modern drama, but only as a tribute of personal friendship; for Morris was a "twelfth-twentieth-century artist," exclusively preoccupied with a vision of beauty unrealized upon the modern stage. In a passage in a letter to me, Mr. Shaw has tersely etched the firm figure of the artist and the man, who could not be induced "to accept ugliness as art, no matter how brilliant, how fashionable, how sentimental, or intellectually interesting you might make it."

"Morris's artistic integrity was, humanly speaking perfect. You could not turn him aside from the question of the beauty and the decency of a thing by bringing up its *interest*, scientific, casuistic, novel, curious, historical or what not. That was most extraordinary in so clever a man; for he was capable of all the interests. Compared to him Ruskin was not an artist at all: he was only a man whose interest in Nature led him to study Turner and whose insight into religion gave him a clue to the art of the really religious painters. He would not give two pence for a rarity or a curiosity or a relic; but when he saw a sanely beautiful thing, and it was for sale, he went into the shop; seized it, held it tight under his arm (it was generally a mediæval book); and, after the feeblest and most transparent show of bargaining, bought it for whatever was asked. Once, when he was rebuked for paying eight hundred pounds for something that a dealer

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would have got for four hundred and fifty pounds, I said, 'If you *want* a thing, you always get the worst of the bargain.' Morris was delighted with my wisdom, and probably spent many unnecessary pounds on the strength of that poor excuse.

"This artistic integrity of his was what made him unintelligible to the Philistine public. When the Americans set to work to imitate his printing, they showed that they regarded him as a fashionably quaint and foolish person; and the Roycroft Shop and all the rest of the culture-curiosity shops of the States poured forth abominations which missed every one of his lessons and exaggerated every one of the practices he tried to cure printers of. In the same way his houses at Hammersmith and Kelmscott were, though quite homely, as beautiful in their domestic way as St. Sophia's in Stamboul; but other people's 'Morris houses' always went wrong, even when he started them right."

One day Mr. Shaw and I were discussing Morris and the influence he exerted upon Shaw. "What Morris taught me," confessed Mr. Shaw, "was in the main technical printing, for example.* And I soon came to realize that his most characteristic trait was integrity in the artistic sense. By watching Morris, I first learned that Ruskin wasn't strong as a critic of works of art. In a sense, Ruskin was a naturalist because he understood Turner. And the key to his comprehension of the pre-Raphaelites was his religious sense. And yet he could not discover so glaring an error as Bernardino Cini's employment of the same model for the Virgin and the Magdalen. The trouble with Ruskin was that he invariably fell into egregious blunders when he didn't have his religious clue."

"I learned a great deal from Morris," he added, "because Morris and I worked together in Socialism and, as a critic, I was intensely interested in the pre-Raphaelite movement."

* In this connection, compare *The Author's View. A Criticism of Modern Book Printing*. By Bernard Shaw. In the *Carson Magazine*, January, 1902.

It was always a source of regret to Shaw that he never met Burne-Jones, Morris's greatest friend. When Morris died, Shaw wrote obituary articles in the *Daily Chronicle* and in the *Saturday Review*; and when McKail's *Life of Morris* appeared, he reviewed it in the *Daily Chronicle*. Burne-Jones was pleased by the *Saturday Review* article, and wanted to meet Shaw. They made appointment after appointment; but something always occurred—an illness, a journey, or the like—to defeat them. At last they resolved that the meeting *must* come off; and a firm arrangement was made for a Sunday lunch, it seems—to be kept at all hazards. But Destiny had a card up its sleeve that they did not reckon with. Burne-Jones died the day before; so Shaw never met him as an acquaintance, and only saw him twice, once at an exhibition where he heard him say that a picture attributed to Morris had been partly painted by Madox Brown, and once at a theatre, where their seats happened to be next one another.

When Shaw became a critic of music in 1888, he began to consider whether he was making enough money by the very hard work of plodding through all the picture exhibitions. At last he counted his gains, and found, to his amazement, that his remuneration for paragraphs at fivepence per line, worked out at—according to his recollection afterwards—less than forty pounds a year; whereas two hundred pounds would not have been at all excessive for the work. "Edmund Yates, when I resigned and told him why," Mr. Shaw once told me, "was as much staggered as I was myself, and proposed a much more lucrative arrangement by which I should divide the work with Lady Colin Campbell. But the division would not have been fair to her; and Yates, recognizing this, did what I asked, which was, to hand the whole department over to Lady Colin, and confine my contributions to music alone."

The period of Shaw's activities as an art critic is memorable less for the quality and value of his criticism than for the revelation of the essential moral integrity of the man so often denounced as the cranky immoralist of this, our time. This, as we shall see, appears most clearly in his relations with W. E. Henley, the story of which, I believe, has never been told

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a print; yet other crucial instances, equally revelative, are worthy of record. Shaw's experience amply justifies his statement that the public has hardly any suspicion of the rarity of the able editor who is loyal to his profession and to his staff; and that without such an editor even moderately honest criticism is impossible. Take, for example, the case of Shaw and the London paper. Shaw wrote about pictures for the best part of a season until a naïve proposal was made to him that he should oblige certain artist-friends of the editorium by favourable notices, and was assured that he might oblige any friends of his own in the same way. "This proposal was made in perfect good faith and in all innocence," Shaw candidly avers, "it never having occurred to those responsible that art criticism was a serious pursuit or that any question of morals or conduct could possibly arise over it. Of course I resigned with some vigour, though without any ill humour; but some I know were quite sincerely, pathetically hurt by my eccentric, unfriendly and disobliging conduct." During his career as a critic Shaw was repeatedly urged by colleagues to call attention to some abuse which they themselves were not sufficiently strongly situated to mention. He had to resign very desirable positions on the critical staff of London papers; in the case above mentioned, because he considered it derogatory to write insincere puffs; and in another case, "because my sense of style revolted against the interpolation in my articles of sentences written by others to express high opinions of artists, unknown to fame and to me." This second resignation followed the appearance of an Academy notice, written by Shaw in the capacity of art critic to another London paper. This article on an Academy exhibition appeared padded out to an extraordinary length by interpolations praising works which Shaw had never seen—"No. 2,744 is a sweet head of Mrs. ——— by that talented young artist, Miss ———," and so on. It is needless to add that Shaw resigned in a highly explosive manner. And so Shaw vanished from the picture galleries. His comment on the conduct of the management of these papers explains his own attitude, testifying conclusively to the rigour of the moral standard to which he always conformed. "They

were no more guilty of corruption," Mr. Shaw expressed the case to me, "than a man with no notion of property can be guilty of theft; and to this day they probably have not the least idea why I threw up a reasonably well paid job and assumed an attitude vaguely implying some sort of disapproval of their right to do what they liked with their own paper."

It was probably at the particular Press view just referred to some time after 1889, that Henley's meeting with Shaw occurred. To go back a little, James Runciman, the uncle of J. F. Runciman, the musical critic, was a Cashel Byronite, and used to write Shaw letters containing occasional references to Henley, who also admired *Cashel Byron's Profession*. Between Runciman, who had known Henley and quarrelled with him, and Cashel Byron, Shaw got into correspondence with Henley. Among the various literary and artistic Duleineas whose championship Henley mistook for criticism, was Mozart. Mr. Shaw thus explained the situation to me:

"As I also knew Mozart's value, Henley induced me to write articles on music for his paper, the *Scots Observer*, afterwards the *National Observer*; and I did write some—not more than half a dozen—perhaps not so many. Henley was an impossible editor. He had no idea of criticism except to glorify the matters he liked, and pursue their rivals with quixotic jealousy. To appreciate Mozart without reviling Wagner was to Henley blank injustice to Mozart. Now, he knew I was what he called a Wagnerite, and that I thought his objections to Wagner *vieux jeu*, stupid, ignorant and common. Therefore he amused himself by interpolating abuse of Wagner into my articles over my signature. Naturally he lost his contributor; and it was highly characteristic of him that he did not understand why he could not get any more articles from me. At the same time he made the *National Observer* an organ, politically and socially, of the commonest sort of plutocratic and would-be aristocratic Toryism, and clamoured in the usual forcible-feeble way for the strong hand to 'put down' the distress which then—in the eighties—was threatening insurrection. For this sort of thing I had no mercy. I did not object to tall talk

about hanging myself and my friends who were trying to get something done for the condition of the people; but what moved me to utter scorn was the association of the high republican atmosphere of Byron, Shelley and Keats, and the gallantry of Dumas *père*—another idol of ours—with the most dastardly class selfishness and political vulgarity. When Henley at last pressed me very hard for another article, I wrote him in a perfectly friendly but frankly contemptuous strain, chaffing him rather fiercely as the master of his fate, the captain of his soul, with his head bloody but unbowed, and his hat always off to the police and the upper classes.” Shaw always believed that, even then, Henley was simply puzzled, and thought Shaw was only making a senseless literary display of smartness at his expense.

Clearly Shaw was revolted by the atrocious vulgarity of Henley’s politics as contrasted with the pretentiousness of his literary attitude. The defence of Henley after his death, to the effect that he knew nothing of politics, and that he placed himself as to the politics of the paper in the hands of his friend Charles Whibley, disarmed Shaw, as I have good reason to know. For Shaw liked Whibley well enough, regarding him as a clever fellow in literary matters, but quite impossible politically. Opinions similar to those quoted below may be found in the only criticism Shaw ever wrote of Henley—a review of his poems in the old *Pall Mall Gazette* under Mr. Stead’s editorship. The following quotation from a hitherto unpublished letter to me vividly clarifies the whole matter by defining the grounds of Shaw’s criticism of Henley:

“Henley interested me as being what I call an Elizabethan, by which I mean a man with an extraordinary and imposing power of saying things, and with nothing whatever to say. The real disappointment about his much discussed article on Stevenson was not that he said spiteful things about his former friend, but that he said nothing at all about him that would not have been true of any man in all the millions then alive. The world very foolishly reproached him because he did not tell the usual epitaph

monger's lies about 'Franklin, my loyal friend.' But the real tragedy about the business was that a man who had known Stevenson intimately, and who was either a penetrating critic or nothing, had nothing better worth saying about him than that he was occasionally stingy about money and that when he passed a looking glass he looked at it. Which Stevenson's parlour-maid could have told as well as Henley if she had been silly enough to suppose that the average man is a generous sailor in a melodrama, and totally incurious and unconscious as to his personal appearance. But it was always thus with Henley. He could appreciate literature and enjoy criticism. He could describe anything that was forced on his observation and experience, from a tom-cat in an arena to a hospital operation. Give him the thing to be expressed, and he could find its expression wonderfully either in prose or verse. But beyond that he could not go: the things he said—or the things he wrote (I know nothing of his conversation)—are always conventionalities, all the worse because they are selected from the worst part of the great stock of conventionalities—the conventional unconventionalisms. He could discover and encourage talent, and was thus half a good editor, but he could not keep friends with it; and so his papers finally fell through."

As in the case of his obituary notices of Sir Augustus Harris and Sir Henry Irving, Shaw was accused of nothing short of brutality in his attitude towards Henley, the Cashel Byronite who had wished to see Shaw's novel dramatized. In the first place, Henley admired Shaw, and it seemed ungenerous for Shaw to repay him by a denial of the sort of talent he desired to excel in. And in the second place, it seemed to Shaw's detractors that it was doubly ungenerous of a man sound in wind and limb to disparage a man who was physically a wreck, fighting bravely against infirmity and pain. I was not surprised to find, on inquiring of Mr. Shaw his real feelings and attitude in the matter, that he regarded both these reasons as absurd, sentimental and pointless.

"People have a strong feeling," Mr. Shaw explained, "that if a man has lost his hearing or sight bravely in a noble cause the world is thereby bound in decency to assume for ever after that he had the eye of an eagle and the ear of a hare." He continued, impressively: "I have never belittled a misfortune in that way. Long ago, when a blind poet died, and certain maudlin speeches of his were repeated in print as expressions of the pathos of his darkened existence, I said, also in print, that he always said these things when he was drunk, and that the fact that he was blind may have added to the pity of them, but did not give them any sort of validity.

"In the same way when, in the European revolutionary movement, men came with horrible experiences of prison and Siberian wanderings on them, and women whose husbands had been hanged or committed suicide, I have always had to stand out against the notion that they were the better instead of the worse for their misfortunes, or that they derived any credit or authority whatever from them. Give them the indulgence due to enforced weakness or the help due to unavoidable distress; but don't make them heroes and leaders *ex-officio* because they have been unlucky enough to be lamed.

"And so, I have often conveyed to sentimental people an impression of revolting callousness simply because I know that suffering is suffering, and not merely the acquisition of a romantic halo. Henley's infirmities were to me trifles compared to those which I had encountered in other cases; and in any case, I was trained to look in the face the fact that infirmities disable people instead of reinforcing them. People who learn in suffering what they teach in song usually give very dangerous lessons; and I admire Henley for having no doctrine of that sort. Besides, I have always abhorred the petty disloyalties which men call *sparing one another's feelings*.

"To make an end of the matter," Mr. Shaw concluded, "Henley, though a barren critic and poet, had enough talent and character to command plenty of consideration. A man cannot be everything. I am as fond of music as Henley was of literature," he added, his grey-blue eyes twinkling brightly; "but I am the worst of players, and have a very poor voice."

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The opinion that Shaw's art during this period is less interesting than his life does not necessarily involve any reflection upon the value of his experience as an art critic in giving direction and tendency to the subsequent course of his development. Indeed Shaw has been mainly influenced by works of art in his artificial culture: he has always been more consciously susceptible to music and painting than to literature. It is an idle assertion—one that Shaw is fond of repeating—that Mozart and Michael Angelo count for a great deal in the making of his mind. And, however paradoxical it may sound, that English dramatists after Shakespeare are practically negligible as concerning their influence in the development of his peculiar and highly specialized dramatic genius. His close and familiar daily intercourse with the music masters of the past; his instant recognition of Wagner's overwhelming greatness; his rapturous delight in that king of music-dramatists, Mozart; his dogged attempts, alone and unaided, to master the difficulties of piano forte playing, which eventuated in his becoming a congenial sympathetic accompanist—all early marked him as a natural and undiscouraged lover of music. His individual studies of Italian art, in its history and its expression, while he was still in his teens, his frequent visits to the Dublin Gallery, the many hours passed in London at the priceless picture galleries in Trafalgar Square and Hampton Court, testify with equal force to his spontaneous preoccupation with the best that has been thought and done in the world of art. It would carry one too far afield to pursue the inquiry as to what influence Michael Angelo might possibly have exerted upon the dramas of Bernard Shaw. But there can be little doubt that what Shaw found to wonder at and glorify in Michael Angelo was his passion for anatomy, his devotion to the studiously realistic, and his unlimited mastery of form acquired through "profound and patient interrogation of reality." Shaw, a close, searching student of life, found untold inspiration in the discovery of the genuinely naturalistic spirit in which Michael Angelo worked! Words he once used in speaking to me of the influence of Michael Angelo upon his art are very illuminating: "I never shall forget climbing an enormously high, rick-

framework, in company with Anatole France," he remarked, "in order to get a closer look at the Delphic Sibyl. We were close enough to touch it with our hands; and I was surprised to discover that, instead of losing, it gained impressiveness on nearer view. The grand, set face made a tremendous impression upon me. For the first time, I fully realized that Michael Angelo was a great artist, and a great man as well—because in every subject is a person of genius. He never had a commonplace subject. His models are extraordinary people. They are all Supermen and Superwomen.

"Michael Angelo, you see," he continued, "taught me this—always to put people of genius into my works. I am always setting a genius over against a commonplace person."

In the same spirit, Shaw praised Madox Brown as a realist, because he had vitality enough to find intense enjoyment in the world as it really is, unbeautified, unidealized, untivated in any way for artistic consumption." The sad, sensuous day-dreams of Rossetti, the gentlemanly draughtsmanship of Leighton, the whole romantic trend of English art, with its delicacy of sentiment, its beauty fancying, its reality-shirking philosophy, found Shaw coldly, cruelly condemnatory. "Take the young lady painted by Ingres as 'La Source,' for example. Imagine having to make conversation for her for a couple of hours." This gives the tone of his criticism. His deepest scorn was aroused by that form of art which sets up "decorative moral systems contrasting rosy and rapturous vice with chilled and languorous virtue, making 'Love' face both ways as the universal softener and redeemer." The artist who sought to depict life with perfect integrity—in Browning's phrase, "to paint man man, whatever the issue"—the artist who sought to express the veracity and reality of life rather than its imagined beauty and poetry, found in Shaw an unhesitating champion. This passion for unidealized reality was the outcome of long and deliberate study of art works, concerning each of which Shaw deliberately forced himself to form an intelligent and conscious estimate. This was the solid residuum of his studies, rescued from a ruck of sophistication. "I remember once when I was an art critic," wrote Shaw in 1897, "and

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when Madox Brown's work was only known to me by a few drawings, treating Mr. Frederick Shields to a critical demonstration of Madox Brown's deficiencies, pointing out in one of the drawings the lack of 'beauty' in some pair of elbows that had more of the wash-tub than of 'The Toilet of Venus' about them. Mr. Shields contrived without any breach of good manners to make it quite clear to me that he considered Madox Brown a great painter and me a fool. I respected both convictions at the time; and now I share them. Only, I plead in extenuation of my folly that I had become so accustomed to take it for granted that what every English painter was driving at was the sexual beautification and moral idealization of life into something as unlike itself as possible, that it did not at first occur to me that a painter could draw a plain woman for any other reason than that he could not draw a pretty one." *

Shaw stood forth as a champion of all forms of art—pictorial, fictive and dramatic—which aim at realistic exposure of the sheer facts of life without idealistic falsification and romantic sublimation. He lauded Madox Brown, for example, as he lauded Ibsen, and for the same reason: they both took for their themes "not youth, beauty, morality, gentility and prosperity as conceived by Mr. Smith of Brixton and Bayswater, but real life taken as it is, with no more regard for poor Smith's dreams and hypocrisies than the weather has for his shiny silk hat when he forgets his umbrella." It is no matter for surprise that the unshirking student of sociological conditions should have chosen to write *Widowera's House* and *Mrs. Warren's Profession*; it would have been astounding had he not done so. And yet the catholicity of his taste in art enabled him to realize, not simply one aspect of English art, but the real English art-culture of to-day. To Shaw, indeed, the significance of the modern movement in England had its germ in the growing sense of the "naïve dignity and charm" of thirteenth-century work, in a passionate affection for the exquisite beauty of fifteenth-century art. "The whole rhetorical

school in English literature, from Shakespeare to Byron," he once wrote, "appears to us in our present mood only another side of the terrible *dégringolade* from Michael Angelo to Canova and Thorwaldsen, all of whose works would not now tempt us to part with a single fragment by Donatello, or even a pretty foundling baby by Della Robbia." He maintained that William Morris made himself the greatest living master of the English language, both in prose and verse, by picking up the tradition of the literary art where Chaucer left it; that Burne-Jones made himself the greatest among English decorative painters by picking up the tradition of his art where Lippi left it, and utterly ignoring "their Raphaels, Correggios and stuff"; and that Morris and Burne-Jones, close friends and co-operators in many a masterpiece, form the highest aristocracy of English art of our day.*

The only controversial question that came up during Shaw's period as an art critic was raised by the Impressionists; and his reputation, with the select few, for consistency is sustained by the course he adopted. He recognized Impressionism as a new birth of energy in art, a movement in painting which was wholly beneficial and progressive, and in no sense insane and decadent. Despite the fact that the movement, like all new movements in art, was accompanied by many absurdities—exhibition of countless daubs, the practice of optical distortion, the substitution of "canvases which looked like enlargements of obscure photographs for the familiar portraits of masters of the bounds in cheerfully unmistakable pink coats, mounted on bright chestnut horses" Shaw supported it vigorously because, "being the outcome of heightened attention and quickened consciousness on the part of its disciples, it was evidently destined to improve pictures greatly by substituting a natural, observant, real style for a conventional, taken-for-granted, ideal one." It is needless to say that Shaw did not fall into the Philistine trap and talk "greenery gallery" nonsense about Burne-Jones and the pre-Raphaelite school: his admiration was checked by the sternest critical reservations. He applauded

* Cf. *King Arthur*. In the *Naturday Review*, January 19th, 1905.

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the Impressionists for their busy study of the atmosphere, and of the relation of light and dark between the various objects depicted, i.e., of "values." Like Zola in his championship of Monet, Shaw led a miniature crusade in behalf of Whistler, whose pictures at first quite naturally amazed people accustomed to see the "good north light" of a St. John's Wood studio represented at exhibitions as sunlight in the open air—for example, Bouguereau's "Girl in a Cornfield." More than this need not be said: that Shaw never joined the ranks of the *moqueurs* who called Mr. Whistler "Jimmy."

It is worthy of record that Shaw vigorously and ably championed the Dutch school, earnestly advocating the claims of James Maris as a great painter; and he stood up for Van Uthde, not only in defence of his pictures of Christ surrounded by people in tall hats and frock coats, but also in favour of his excellent painting of light in a dry, crisp, diffused way then quite unfashionable. But his most signal art criticism of the last decade, beyond question, has had to do with photography. In 1901, he announced that "the conquest by photography of the whole field of monochromatic representative art may be regarded as completed by the work of this year." His position is based on the dictum that "in photography, the drawing counts for nothing, the thought and judgment count for everything; whereas in the etching and daubing processes where great manual skill is needed to produce anything that the eye can endure, the execution counts for more than the thought." This is no new or sudden notion, derived from the study of some photographic exhibition, but the mature statement of a judgment arrived at over a quarter of a century ago. In *An Unsocial Socialist*, Trefusis astounds Prentiss and Sir Charles Brandon with those same remarkable views on photography which to-day, in the mouth of Bernard Shaw, so delight the patrons of the Photographic Salon.*

"It is more than twenty years since I first said in print that nine-tenths (or ninety-nine hundredths, I forget

* Compare *Photography*, October 26th, 1909.

which) of what was then done by brush and pencil would presently be done, and far better done, by the camera. But it needed some imagination, as well as some hardihood, to say this at that time . . . because the photographers of that day were not artists. . . . Let us admit handsomely that some of the elder men had the root of the matter in them as the younger men of to-day; but the process did not then attract artists. . . . On the whole, the process was not quite ready for the ordinary artist, because (1) it could not touch colour or even give colours their proper light values; (2) the Impressionist movement had not then rediscovered and popularized the great range of art that lies outside colour; (3) the eyes of artists had been so long educated to accept the most grossly fictitious conventions as truths of representation that many of the truths of the focussing screen were at first repudiated as grotesque falsehoods; (4) the wide-angled lens did in effect lie almost as outrageously as a Royal Academician, whilst the anastigmat was revoltingly prosaic, and the silver print, though so exquisite that the best will, if they last, be one day prized by collectors, was cloying, and only suitable to a narrow range of subjects; (5) above all, the vestries would cheerfully pay fifty pounds for a villainous oil-painting of a hospitable chairman, whilst they considered a guinea a first-rate price for a dozen cabinets, and two-pound-ten a noble bid for an enlargement, even when the said enlargement had been manipulated so as to be as nearly as possible as bad as the fifty pound painting. But all that is changed nowadays. Mr. Whistler, in the teeth of a storm of ignorant and silly ridicule, has forced us to acquire a sense of tone, and has produced portraits of almost photographic excellence; the camera has taught us what we really saw as against what the draughtsman used to show us; and the tele-photo lens and its adaptations, with the isochromatic plate and screen, and the variety and manageableness of modern printing processes, have converted the intelligent artists, smashed the picture-fancying critics, and produced exhibitions such as those

now open at the Dudley and New Galleries, which may be visited by people who, like myself, have long since given up as unendurable the follies and falsehoods, the tricks, fakes, happy accidents, and desolating conventions of the picture galleries. The artists have still left to them invention, didactics, and (for a little while longer) colour. But selection and representation, covering ninety-nine-hundredths of our annual output of art, belong henceforth to photography. Someday the camera will do the work of Velasquez and Peter de Hooghe, colour and all; and then the draughtsmen and painters will be left to cultivate the pious edifications of Raphael, Kaulbach, Delaroche, and the designers of the S. P. C. K. But even then they will photograph their models instead of drawing them." *

In a paper Maurice Maeterlinck wrote for Mr. Alvin Langdon Coburn, who kindly gave me a copy, he charges art with having held itself aloof from "the great movement which for half a century has engrossed all forms of human activity in profitably exploiting the natural forces that fill heaven and earth." Maeterlinck lauds the camera as an instrument of thought, proclaiming it the best of mediums, because it serves "to portray objects and beings more quickly and more accurately than can pencil or crayon." Just as Maeterlinck concludes that thought has at last found a fissure through which to penetrate the mystery of this anonymous force (the sun), "invade it, subjugate it, animate it, and compel it to say such things as have not yet been said in all the realm of chiaroscuro, of grace, of beauty and of truth," so Shaw expresses his belief that "the old game is up," and that "the camera has hopelessly beaten the pencil and paint-brush as an instrument of artistic representation."

Shaw is a vigorous champion of the photographic art in its integrity; attempts at imitation of etching or painting draw his hottest fire. The idea of sensitive photographers allowing

* *The Exhibitions—1.*, by G. Bernard Shaw. In the *Amateur Photographer*, October 1st, 1901.

themselves to be bull-dozed into treating painting, not as an obsolete makeshift which they have surpassed and superseded, but as a glorious ideal to which they have to live up!!! One day Mr. Shaw was showing me some striking examples of his own photographic work—a remarkable picture of Sidney Webb, I recall in especial, an effect got by omitting to do something in taking the photograph. Mr. Shaw remarked that some of the most unique and fantastic pictures he had ever taken were the results of accidents. One day, for instance, he spilled some boiling water over a photograph of himself, which immediately converted it into so capital an imitation of the damaged parts of Mantegna's frescoes in Mantua that the print delighted him more in its ruin than it had in its original sanity. And, in view of his violently-expressed detestation of photographic imitation of painting, it is very refreshing to hear him confess that his own experience as a critic and picture fancier had sophisticated him so thoroughly, that "those accidental imitations of the products of the old butter-fingered methods of picture-making often fascinate me so that I have to put forth all my strength of mind to resist the temptation to become a systematic forger of damaged frescoes and Gothic caricatures."

Mr. Shaw was harshly ridiculed and sharply censured for permitting the exhibition in 1906 of a nude photograph of himself by Alvin Langdon Coburn. In this connection, I recall a conversation with Eduard J. Steichen, who was showing me a collection of his masterly prints, including several nudes. The faces of the nude figures were averted; and Steichen told me, with a laugh, that Shaw had ridiculed him unmercifully for permitting his subjects to call attention to their embarrassment and shame by averting their faces. And in 1901, Mr. Shaw wrote:

"The camera will not build up the human figure into a monumental fiction as Michael Angelo did, or coil it cunningly into a decorative one, as Burne-Jones did. But it will draw it as it is, in the clearest purity or the softest mystery, as no draughtsman can or ever could. And by the seriousness of its veracity it will make the slightest

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lubricity intolerable. 'Nudes from the Paris Salon' pass the moral *octroi* because they justify their rank as 'high art' by the acute boredom into which they plunge the spectator. Their cheap and vulgar appeal is nullified by the vapid unreality of their representation. Photography is so truthful—its subjects are so obviously realities, and not idle fancies—that dignity is imposed on it as effectually as it is on a church congregation. Unfortunately, so is that false decency, rightly detested by artists, which teaches people to be ashamed of their bodies; and I am sorry to see that the photographic life school still shirks the faces of its sitters, and thus gives them a disagreeable air of doing something they are ashamed of." *

One morning in Paris, during the period that Shaw was sitting to Rodin, C'ohurn, with his camera, caught Shaw coming out of his morning bath; whereupon he laughingly bade Shaw to "be still and look pleasant." "I casually assumed, as near as I could recall it," Mr. Shaw told me, "the pose of Rodin's '*Le Penseur*.' It was all done in a moment, and although I am not like '*Le Penseur*,' at least my pose is not unlike his." Mr. Shaw permitted the photograph to be put on exhibition as an object-lesson, so to speak, to the photographic life school; as Steichen expressed it to me: "I believe Mr. Shaw wanted to show the courage of his convictions, by publicly taking the medicine he so unhesitatingly prescribed for others."

It is needless to point out that Bernard Shaw, the analytic critic and clear thinker *par excellence*, would naturally prefer photography to painting. When away from London he is seldom to be seen without a camera slung over his shoulders; and he has been taking pictures, and dabbling away at interesting photographic experiments, for many years. Without talent as an artist himself, but with almost a passion for photography, we need not be surprised to hear him praise the photographer because he is free of "that clumsy tool—the human hand—which will always go its own single way, and no other."

Steichen and Coburn, he has told me and he has told them, are the two greatest photographers in the world; and he once said to me of Coburn: "Whenever his work does not please you, watch and pray for a while and you will find that your opinion will change." *

To Shaw the true conquest of colour no longer seems far off in the light of Lumière's discoveries, and the day will soon come, he surmises, when work like that of Hals and Velasquez may be done by men who have never painted anything except their own nails with pyro. "As to the painters and their fanciers, I snort defiance at them; their day of daubs is over." He once declared for two photographs of himself against anything of Holbein, Rembrandt, or Velasquez. "When I compare their subtle diversity with the monotonous inaccuracy and infirmity of drawings, I marvel at the gross absence of analytic power and of imagination which still sets up the works of the great painters, defects and all, as standard, instead of picking out the qualities they achieved and the possibilities they revealed, in spite of the barbarous crudity of their methods." There are certain quite definite things the photographer has not yet achieved: Shaw's imagination as a creative dramatist teaches him this, even though he insists that the decisive quality in a photographer is the "faculty of seeing certain things and being tempted by them." Oscar Wilde acutely remarked that in certain modern portraits Sargent's, notably, I should say--there is often as much of the artist as of the subject. Bernard Shaw insists that in the pictorial and dramatic phases of the photographic art of the future, both the artist and the subject must be imaginative artists, working in conjunction. "As to the creative, dramatic, story telling painters Caraccio, and Mantegna, and the miraculous Hogarth, for example--it is clear that photography can do their work only through a co-operation of sitter and camerist which assimilates the relations of artist and model to those at present existing between playwright and actor. Indeed, just as the playwright is sometimes only a very humble employee of the actor or

* Compare Shaw's article, *Coburn the Camerist*, in the *Metropolitan Magazine*, May, 1906.

actress-manager, it is conceivable that in dramatic and didactic photography the predominant partner will not be necessarily either the photographer or the model, but simply whichever of the twain contributes the rarest art to the co-operation. Already that instinctive animal, the public, goes into a shop and says: 'Have you any photographs of Mrs. Patrick Campbell?' and not 'Have you any photographs by Elliott and Fry, Downey, etc., etc.?' The Salon is altering this, and photographs are becoming known as Demachys, Holland Days, Horsley Hinton, and so forth, as who should say Greuzes, Hoppners and Linnells. But, then, the Salon has not yet touched the art of Hogarth. When it does, 'The Rake's Progress' will evidently depend as much on the genius of the rake as of the moralist who squeezes the bulb, and then we shall see what we shall see."

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"CORNO DI BASSETTO" AND "G. B. S."

"Don't be in a hurry to contradict G. B. S., as he never commits himself on a musical subject until he knows at least six times as much about it as you do."—*Music*. In the *World*, January 16th, 1893.



CHAPTER VIII

IN 1888 a gentleman described in the *World* at that time as "a Chinese statesman named Tay Pay,"* founded the *Star*, claiming for it the distinction of the first and only half-penny paper, and ignoring the *Echo*, which early succumbed to the treatment. On the recommendation of Mr. H. W. Massingham, Shaw was placed on the editorial staff as leader writer, on the second day of the paper's existence. At that time the Fabian Society had just invented the municipal modification of Socialism called Progressivism; and the sole object of Shaw, then a "moderate and constitutional, but strenuous Socialist," in joining the *Star* was to foist this new invention upon it as the latest thing in Liberalism. Here Shaw's "impossibilism" broke out worse than ever; and Mr. O'Connor, an Irishman too, and a skilled journalist in the bargain, was not to be taken in. He refused to print the articles. "Then the Fabian Society ordered all its members to write to the *Star*," records Shaw, "expressing indignant surprise at the lukewarmness of its Liberalism and the reactionary and obsolete character of its views. This was more successful; the paper became Progressive, and London rose so promptly to the new programme, that the first County Council election was fought and won on it. The Liberal leaders remonstrated almost daily with T. P., being utterly bewildered by what was to them a most dangerous heresy. But the *Star* articles became more and more Progressive, then ultra-Progressive, then positively Jacobin; and the further they went the better London liked them. They were not, I beg to say, written by me, but by Mr. H. W. Massingham."†

* Mr. T. P. O'Connor.

† In speaking of his first outburst as a journalistic writer, in a "Lon-

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While the Fabians were thus engaged in "collaring the *Star* by this stage army stratagem," Shaw, to the utter consternation of the Chinese statesman, was writing political leaders for which the country was not ripe by about five hundred years according to the political computation of the eighties. Too good-natured to do his duty and put Shaw out summarily, Tay Pay, in desperation, proposed that Shaw should have a column to himself, to be headed "Music," and to be "coloured by occasional allusions to that art." It was with a gasp of relief that he heard Shaw's acceptance of the proposition; and so a new career opened for Shaw as "*Corno di Bassetto*," * a "person now forgotten, but I flatter myself, very popular for a couple of years in the *Star*."

Among Shaw's colleagues on the *Star* at this time were Clement K. Shorter and Richard Le Gallienne. A. B. Walkley, the distinguished dramatic critic of the *London Times*, was then the "*Star* man" in the theatres, and although he was more fastidious and dignified than the incorrigible "*Bassetto*," he was quite as amusing. "I am far from denying that a man of genius may make even a newspaper notice of the Royal Academy or of a 'Monday Pop.' permanently valuable and delightful," Mr. Archer once said; "all I maintain is that it assuredly takes a man of genius to do so. Mr. Bernard Shaw . . . has to my thinking a peculiar genius for bringing day-by-day musical criticism into vital relation with æsthetics on a large, and even with ethics and politics—in a word, with life. . . ." According to his subsequent confession, "The

20th, 1901): "I well remember that the first paragraph I wrote was in reference to the first number of the *Star*, which had just been published. Mr. T. P. O'Connor, in his editorial *pronouncements*, had been hotly philanthropic. 'If,' he had written, 'we enable the charwoman to put two lumps of sugar in her tea instead of one, then we shall not have worked in vain. My comment on this was that if Mr. O'Connor were to find that charwomen did not take sugar in their tea, his paper would, presumably, cease to be issued. . . . I quote it merely to show that I, who am still regarded as a young writer, am exactly connote with Mr. Shaw. For it was in this very number of the *Star* that Mr. Shaw, as '*Corno di Bassetto*,' made his first bow to the public.' This latter statement, although inaccurate, is essentially correct.

* The name of a musical instrument which went out of use in Mozart's time.



By permission of

the Artist and "Fanny Face"

"Magnific, he has the power to infect almost everyone with the delight that he takes in himself." (Mr. George Bernard Shaw)

Illustration By Max Hurlbaker



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Star's own captious critic," as Shaw was denominated at the time, used the word music in a platonically comprehensive sense; for he wrote about anything and everything that came into his head. He once spoke of his column in the *Star*, signed "Corno di Bassetto," as "a mixture of triviality, vulgarity, farce and tomfoolery with genuine criticism." George Henry Lewes' style, as Mr. Archer has shrewdly observed,* reminds one of that of "Corno di Bassetto"; but the dramatic essays of Lewes, Shaw freely confesses, are miles beyond the crudities of Di Bassetto, although the combination of a laborious criticism with a recklessly flippant manner is the same in both. Indeed, Shaw's column in the *Star* was perhaps the most startling evidence of the insurgency and iconoclasm of the New Journalism as represented by the *Star*, its foremost exponent. Imagine a column a week in the sprightly vein of the following:

"I warn others that Offenbach's music is wicked. It is abandoned stuff: every accent in it is a snap of the fingers in the face of moral responsibility, every ripple and sparkle on its surface twits me for my teetotalism, and mocks at the early rising which I fully intend to make a habit of some day. . . . In Mr. Cellic's scores, music is still the chastest of the muses. In Offenbach's she is—what shall I say? I am ashamed of her. I no longer wonder that the Germans came to Paris and suppressed her with fire and thunder. Here in England how respectable she is! Virtuous and rustically innocent her six-eight measures are, even when Dorothy sings, 'Come, fill up your glass to the brim'! She learned her morals from Handel, her ladylike manners from Mendelssohn, her sentiment from the 'Bailiff's Daughter of Islington.' But listen to her in Paris, with Offenbach. Talk of six-eight time: why, she stumbles at the second quaver, only to race off again in a wild Bacchanalian, Saturnalian, petticoat spurning, irreclaimable, shocking quadrille."

* In his introduction to the *Dramatic Essays of John Forster and George Henry Lewes*.

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No more accurate characterization of the work of Di Bassetto can be conceived than is to be found in Shaw's own confession. He secured the privileges he usurped, he says, in two ways: first, by taking care that "Corno di Bassetto" should always be amusing; and, secondly, by using a considerable knowledge of music, which nobody suspected him of possessing, to provide a solid substratum of genuine criticism for the mass of outrageous levities and ridiculous irrelevancies which were the dramatic characteristics of "Bassetto." "I daresay these articles would seem shabby, vulgar, cheap, silly, vapid enough if they were dug up and exposed to the twentieth century light; but in those days, and in the context of the topics of that time, they were sufficiently amusing to serve their turn." *

It will be recalled that Shaw, from his early childhood, had been in close contact with the best that had been thought, felt, and written in music. It was his practice as a boy to whistle to himself the operatic themes he heard continually practised at his home, precisely as a street *gamin* whistles the latest piece of "rag-time." He was introduced to Wagner's music for the first time by hearing a second-rate military band play an arrangement of the *Tannhäuser* march. He thought it a rather commonplace plagiarism from the famous theme in *Der Freischütz*. This boyish impression was exactly the same as that recorded of the mature Berlioz, who was to Shaw at that time the merest shadow of a name which he had read once or twice. Shaw learned his notes at the age of sixteen; and although for a long time thereafter he inflicted untold suffering on his neighbours, he became in time quite a good accompanist. In the early days in London, when he was not laboriously writing five pages a day on one of his novels, Shaw occasionally tried his hand at musical composition, at writing and setting words to music. I have before me now a folded sheet of pink paper, dated "28d of June, 1888," in Shaw's fine handwriting, on which he had written music for one of Shelley's poems, Ros-

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sheet, in Shaw's hand, is copied the poem, headed *Lines*, beginning:

"When the lamp is shattered,
The light in the dust lies dead;
When the cloud is scattered,
The rainbow's glory is shed;

"When the lute is broken,
Sweet notes are remembered not;
When the lips have spoken,
Loved accents are soon forgot."

Shaw was deeply interested in a study of Wagner's music, and took great pains in studying Wagner's methods of composition. I have seen Shaw's musical notes made during this period--sheets of stiff paper on which he had written out the musical scores of the various distinct *leit motifs* in the Wagnerian operas--the Ring motive, the Rheingold motive, etc., etc.--with fine marginal stenographic notes in the Pitman system. He once made quite a study of counterpoint; and, as we learned in an earlier chapter, acquired a grounding in "Temperament" through his acquaintance with his friend, James Lecky. When Mr. O'Connor transferred Shaw from the editorial staff to the post of musical critic for the *Star*, believing that he could do no great harm there, his wisdom was justified by the result. All his experience in writing and criticism on the *Star*, combined with his early knowledge of music, filled Shaw's hands with weapons. And when Louis Engel, the "best hated musical critic in Europe," as Shaw calls him, found it necessary to give up his position as musical critic of the *World*, his post fell to "Corno di Bassetto."

At the time when Shaw first entered the lists as a musical critic, he was possessed of the strongest convictions on the subject of music, musicians, and true musical genius. In *Love Among the Artists* Shaw has given expression to his decided views concerning the pedantry of the academic schools, the absurd jargon of conventional musical criticism, and the vacuity and inconsequence of all music, based on method alone, which does not come into being through unaffected enthusiasm

of personality. The musical criticism which takes the analysis of "Bach in B minor" as its point of departure is there held up to unmeasured scorn. It seems something more than a coincidence that the avoidance of this very subject, with all its implications, should have been the condition on which Shaw began his career as a critic of music. In connection with his appointment as musical critic of the *Star*, Shaw relates this story of Mr. O'Connor: "He placed himself in my hands with one reservation only. 'Say what you like,' he said; 'but for— (here I omit a pathetic Oriental adjuration) don't tell us anything about Bach in B minor.' It was a bold speech, considering the superstitious terror in which the man who has the abracadabra of musical technology at his fingers' end holds the uninitiated editor; but it conveyed a golden rule." Shaw was in perfect accord with the editor in the belief that "Bach in B minor" is not good criticism, not good sense, not interesting to the general readers, not useful to the student. He fulfilled his part of the contract far more completely than the "Chinese statesman" had any right to expect. Not only did Shaw not tell us anything about "Bach in B minor": he spent six years of his life in holding the practice up to ridicule and contempt!

Bernard Shaw brought his critical faculty to bear upon music in England during the period when the academic faction held full sway. There was a large reserve of native musical talent in England at this time, but it found nothing like full scope for its development, largely because of the commercial pandering to popular taste. The so-called masters of contemporary music in England were all reared on the methodology of the schools. Dr. Mackenzie, the Principal of the Royal Academy of Music, was probably the leader of the academic faction. Sir George Grove, author of that standard work, the *Dictionary of Musicians*, was an honoured figure in the world of music. Dr. Hubert Parry, at the height of his creative activity, was writing and occasionally conducting his oratorios, such as *Job* and *Judith*. These and other earlier works of his—notably, *L'Allegro ed il Pensieroso* and *Prometheus*—Shaw took the utmost pleasure in declaring to be "without any merit whatso-

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ever," or "the most conspicuous failures," despite their fine feeling, their scrupulous moderation, and other pleasant and perfectly true irrelevancies. At the Albert Hall, Sir Joseph Barnby, Principal of the Royal Choral Society, in his measured and complacent style, was leading those huge, lumbering choirs which are still the pride of Great Britain. Villiers Stanford, that Irish professor ever trifling in a world of ideas, was writing his *Eden*, and other works, which entitled him to a high place in the councils of academicism. Goring Thomas, for his *Golden Web*, and other operas, had already attained a position as a dramatic composer, which, according to Shaw, at least, "placed the production of an opera of his beyond all suspicion as a legitimate artistic enterprise." Arnold Dolmetsch, that rarely fine interpreter of ancient music, was giving those unique viol concerts in the hall of Barnard's Inn and elsewhere which charmed Arthur Symonds yesterday as they charmed Bernard Shaw long ago. Gilbert and Sullivan had once more joined forces in *Utopia*, scoring another operatic triumph, somewhat less decisive and conspicuous, it must be confessed, than *Pinafore*, *The Mikado* and *The Pirates of Penzance*. Cowen was winning encomiums as a conductor, and Sterndale Bennett was still a name to conjure with. To the many, Wagner, like Ibsen, was still an offensive impostor. But Ashton Ellis's exhaustive task of translating Wagner's works was slowly proceeding; and Armbruster, that Bayreuth extension lecturer, so to speak, aided by Shaw in the *Star* and in the *World*, was paving the way for a more general comprehension and appreciation of Wagner in England. Paderewski was slowly mounting to the position of the foremost living pianist, and Patti had begun to give her "Farewell Concerts."

In musical criticism, as in all other phases of his strangely diversified career, Shaw is essentially a revolutionary. His attack upon Parry's *Job*, so he always maintained, threatened to call forth a great national protest! He fought for Wagner with the same revolutionary enthusiasm which enlisted him in the cause of Ibsen—and Shaw. He had no tolerance for anything traditional, not even for traditional versions of old airs,

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jealous was he of his critical sense, for fear of its prostitution by irrelevant beauty or factitious romance, that he steadfastly steeled himself against that subtlest of all forces in undermining critical integrity—personal magnetism.

Perhaps the simplest way to arrive at a comprehension of Shaw, the critic of music, is by taking account of his tastes and aversions. For example, Shaw usually viewed Paderewski's performances, at the time when the Polish pianist was first creating such sensations in England, as brutal contests between the piano and the pianist to settle the question of the survival of the fittest. The following description of his sensations on hearing Paderewski is not without its reminder of that once popular *pièce de récitation*, *How Ruby Played*.^{*} "The concerto was over, the audience in wild enthusiasm, and the piano a wreck. Regarded as an immensely spirited young harmonious blacksmith, who puts a concerto on the piano as upon an anvil, and hammers it out with an exuberant enjoyment of the swing and strength of the proceeding, Paderewski is at least exhilarating; and his hammer play is not without variety, some of it being feathery, if not delicate. But his touch, light or heavy, is the touch that hurts; and the glory of his playing is the glory that attends murder on a large scale when impetuously done." Three years later, in 1893, Shaw has reached the conclusion that Paderewski is a weak, a second-hand composer, but an artist whose genuine creative achievements have assured him the title of the greatest of living pianists. "I had rather see Paderewski in his next composition for orchestra drop the piano altogether," Shaw said. "It is the one instrument he does not understand as a composer, exactly because he understands it so well as an executant."

For David Bispham Shaw had the sincerest admiration, and the De Reszkes won his praise because, as he explained it, they sang like dignified men, instead of like male viragoes in the dramatic Italian style. He made a point of insisting, however, that Édouard de Reszke occasionally abused his power by "wilful bawling" for the mere fun of making a thundering

^{*} The reference is to Rubinstein.

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noise. On hearing Gerster in 1890, he was sufficiently charmed to say: "The old artistic feeling remained so unspoiled and vivid that, if here and there a doubt crossed me whether the notes were all reaching the furthest half-crown seat as tellingly as they came to my front stall, I ignored it for the sake of the charm which neither singer nor opera (*The Huguenots*) has lost for me." Of a concert given in 1893 by "our still adored Patti," whom he calls "now the most accomplished of mezzo-sopranos," he gives the following description:

"It always amuses me to see that vast audience (at Albert Hall) from the squares and villas listening with moist eyes whilst the opulent lady from the celebrated Welsh castle fervently sings: 'Oh, give me my lowly thatched cottage again.' The concert was a huge success: there were bouquets, raptures, effusions, kissings of children, graceful sharings of the applause with *obbligato* players—in short, the usual exhibition of the British bourgeoisie in the part of Bottom and the prima donna in the part of Titania. Patti hazarded none of her old exploits as a florid soprano with an exceptional range: her most arduous achievement was '*Ah, fors e lui*,' so liberally transposed that the highest notes in the rapid traits were almost all sharp, the artist having been accustomed for so many years to sing them at a higher pitch. Time has transposed Patti a minor third down, but the middle of her voice is still even and beautiful; and this with her unsurpassed phrasing and that delicate touch and expressive *nuance* which make her *cantabile* singing so captivating, enables her to maintain what was, to my mind, always the best part of her old supremacy." *

Of that brilliant executant Essipoff, the wife of Leachetizky, Shaw said that if it were possible to believe that she *cared* two straws about what she played, she would be one of the greatest executive musicians of Europe. Hollman was, on the whole

* *Musie*, signed G. H. S., in the *World*, June 7th, 1893.

and without any exception, in Shaw's opinion, the greatest violoncellist he had ever heard. Joachim's fineness of tone, perfect dignity of style, and fitness of phrasing impressed Shaw as truly magnificent; and when he heard him play Bach's "Chaconne in D minor," he confessed that he came as near as he ever came to calling anything done by mortal artist perfect. Ysaÿe, that other master-violinist, moved Shaw as much as he moved Symons by the perfectly harmonious blending of his every faculty. Shaw smilingly reminded all readers of the screed of G. B. S. that "Decidedly, if Ysaÿe only perseveres in playing splendidly to us for twenty-five years more or so, it will dawn on us at last that he is one of the greatest of living artists; and then he may play how he pleases until he turns ninety without the least risk of ever hearing a word of disparagement or faint praise."

In Shaw's view, Mozart is the ideal, the supreme composer. Again and again, throughout his works, Shaw has lavished upon Mozart the finely-tempered praise of the clear-eyed devotee. The critical rating of a composer is overwhelmingly impressive when it is supported by the avowal of personal indebtedness; and Shaw has frequently asserted that Mozart has influenced his dramatic works more than any English dramatist since Shakespeare. I remember discussing Mozart with Mr. Shaw one day; and I took occasion to express my scepticism as to the possibility of any profound influence exerted by Mozart the composer upon Shaw the dramatist. "In a certain sense, Mozart must always have been a model for me," replied Mr. Shaw. "Throughout the entire period of my career as a critic of music, I always thought and wrote of Mozart as a master of masters. The dream of a musician is to have the technique of Mozart. It was not his 'divine melodies' but his perfect technique that profoundly influenced me. What a great thing to be a dramatist for dramatists, just as Mozart was a composer for composers! First, and above all things else, Mozart was a *master to masters*."

The second part of *Faust* impressed Shaw as the summit of Schumann's achievement in dramatic music; and he was very ready to admit that Schumann had at least one gift which has

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now come to rank very high among the qualifications of a composer for the stage: a strong feeling for harmony as a means of emotional expression. He always found Brahms to be insufferably tedious when he tried to be profound, but delightful when he merely tried to be pleasant and naïvely sentimental. "Euphuism, which is the beginning and end of Brahms' big works," Shaw remarks in connection with the "Symphony in E minor," "is more to my taste in music than in literature. Brahms takes an essentially commonplace theme; gives it a strange air by dressing it in the most elaborate and far-fetched harmonies; keeps his countenance severely (which at once convinces an English audience that he must have a great deal in him); and finds that a good many wisecracks are ready to guarantee him as deep as Wagner, and the true heir of Beethoven." Dvorak, Bohemia's most eminent creative musician, famed alike for an inexhaustible wealth of melodic invention and a rich variety of colouring, is stamped by Shaw as a romantic composer, and only that. His "Requiem" Shaw found utterly tedious and mechanical, while his "Symphony in G" is "very nearly up to the level of a Rossini overture, and would make excellent promenade music at the summer fêtes." The announcement of a Mass by Dvorak affected Shaw very much as would the announcement of a "Divine Comedy" in ever so many cantos by Robert Louis Stevenson! He regarded Verdi as the greatest of living dramatic composers; and years before Shaw began writing musical criticism, when Von Bülow and others were contemptuously repudiating Verdi, Shaw was able to discern in him a man possessing more power than he knew how to use, or, indeed, was permitted to use by the old operatic forms imposed on him by circumstances.*

For the solemnly manufactured operas of Saint Saëns, Shaw felt not mere distaste, but genuine contempt. As soon, in fact, as he discovered the sort of thing that a French composer dreams of as the summit of operatic achievement, his artistic sympathy with Paris was cut off at the main. Early in his career, he solemnly announces, he gave up Paris as impossible

* In this connection compare Shaw's article: *A Word More about Verdi*, in the *Anglo-Saxon Review*, Vol. VIII., March, 1901.

from the artistic point of view! His characterization of French music is nothing short of Heinesque.

"London I do not so much mind. Your average Londoner is, no doubt, as void of feeling for the fine arts as a man can be without collapsing bodily; but, then, he is not at all ashamed of his condition. On the contrary, he is rather proud of it, and never feels obliged to pretend that he is an artist to the tips of his fingers. His pretences are confined to piety and politics, in both of which he is an unspeakable impostor. It is your Parisian who concentrates his ignorance and hypocrisy, not on politics and religion, but on art. In this unwholesome state of self-consciousness he demands statues and pictures and operas in all directions, long before any appetite for beauty has set his eyes or ears aching; so that he at once becomes the prey of pedants who undertake to supply him with classical works, and swaggers who set up in the romantic department. Hence, as the Parisian, like other people, likes to enjoy himself, and as pure pedantry is tedious and pure swaggering tiresome, what Paris chiefly loves is a genius who can make the classic voluptuous and the romantic amusing. And so, though you cannot walk through Paris without coming at every corner upon some fountain or trophy or monument for which the only possible remedy is dynamite, you can always count upon the design including a female figure free from the defect known to photographers as under-exposure; and if you go to the opera—which is, happily, an easily avoidable fate—you may wonder at the expensive trifling that passes as musical poetry and drama, but you will be compelled to admit that the composer has moments, carried as far as academic propriety admits, in which he rises from sham history and tragedy to genuine polka and barcarolle; whilst there is, to boot, always one happy half hour when the opera-singers vanish, and capable, thoroughly trained, hard-working, technically skilled executants entertain you with a ballet. Of course the ballet, like everything else in

Paris, is a provincial survival, fifty years behind English time; but still it is generally complete and well done by people who understand ballet, whereas the opera is generally mutilated and ill done by people who don't understand opera."

Is it any wonder, then, that the "tinpot stage history" of Saint Saëns was the bane of Shaw's existence and the abomination of his critical sense? Or that Offenbach's music struck him as wicked, abandoned stuff? And of Meyerbeer, then still regarded in Paris as a sort of Michael Angelo, he says: "If you try to form a critical scheme of the development of English poetry from Pope to Walt Whitman, you cannot by any stretch of ingenuity make a place in it for Thomas Moore, who is accordingly either ignored in such schemes or else contemptuously dismissed as a flowery trifle. In the same way, you cannot get Meyerbeer into the Wagnerian scheme except as the Autolycus of the piece."

The most significant feature of Shaw's career as a musical critic was his championship of Wagner. Although he had an exalted admiration for Wagner, he was no hero-worshipper, nor in the least degree blind to the defects of Wagner as a composer who failed to preserve philosophic continuity and coherence in his greatest dramatic achievement. The similarity of tastes in music between Wagner and Shaw is a very noticeable feature of the "C. di B." and "G. B. S." criticisms. It was to be expected that Shaw the dramatist would admire Wagner for composing music designed to brighten the expression of human emotion; he realized fully that such music was intensely affecting in the presence of that emotion, and utter nonsense apart from it. Like Wagner, Shaw had a deep love for Beethoven, an intense admiration for Mozart, and a sincere appreciation of the Mendelssohn of the Scotch symphony. And he likewise shared Wagner's sovereign contempt for the efforts of Schumann and Brahms to be "profound."

A German would laugh at the notion that Wagner required any "championing" during the years from 1888 to 1894 inclusive, since the Bayreuth performances began in 1876. The

New York, Shaw wrote a reply to Max Nordau's *Degeneration*, which was then (1895) making a great impression on the American mind. This reply, entitled *A Degenerate's View of Nordau*, was published in a double copy of *Liberty*, especially printed to make room for it; Mr. Tucker sent a copy to every paper in America; and, as Shaw avers, Nordau's book has never been heard of in an American paper since. It was undoubtedly a great piece of journalism in those days for Mr. Tucker to pick out the right man as Shaw unquestionably was—for that stupendous task; and Shaw still takes an unholy joy in showing how Tucker the crank was able to beat all the big fashionable editors at their own game. Besides being largely imported in England, the article did Shaw a great private service. For when William Morris read it, he at once threw off all reserve in talking to Shaw about modern art, and treated him thenceforth as a man who knew enough to understand what might be said to him on that subject. The article contained, among many other equally able things, an eminently sane and intelligible treatment of the development of modern music, and its relation to Wagner. Mr. Huneker, who regards this as Shaw's finest piece of controversial work, rightly declared that it completely swept Nordau from the field of discussion.*

The other piece of Wagnerian criticism by which Shaw is best known was the subject of a letter Shaw once wrote to the

* In the letter Mr. Tucker wrote to Mr. Shaw at Easter, 1895, Shaw once told me, he said that he knew Shaw was the only man in the world capable of tackling Nordau on his various fields of music, literature, painting, etc.: "He said that if I would find out the highest figure ever paid by, say, the *Nineteenth Century* for a single article to any writer, not excluding Gladstone or any other eminent man, he would pay me that sum for a review of 'Degeneration' for his little paper. This, mind you, from a man who was publishing a paper at his own expense, without a chance of making anything out of it, and with a considerable chance of finding himself in prison some day for telling the truth about American institutions. Mr. Tucker probably worked double shifts and ate half meals for the next two or three years to pay off what the adventure cost him." This essay, somewhat amplified, was recently (February, 1906) published in America by Benjamin R. Tucker, N. Y. in England by the *New Age Press*, London—under the title, *The Sanity of Art: an Exposure of the Current Nonsense about Artists being Degenerate*.

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editor of the *Academy* (October 15th, 1895): "I see you have been announcing a book by me entitled, 'The Complete Wagnerite,'" writes Shaw. "This is an error; you are thinking of an author named Izaak Walton. The book, which is a work of great merit, even for me, is called, 'The Perfect Wagnerite,' and is an exposition of the philosophy of *Der Ring des Nibelungen*. It is a G. B. essence of modern Anarchism, or Neo-Protestantism. This lucid description speaks for itself. As it has been written on what the whole medical faculty and all the bystanders declare to be my death-bed, it is naturally rather a book of devotion than one of those vain brilliancies which I was wont to give off in the days of my health and strength. - P. S. I have just sprained my ankle in trying to master the art of bicycling on one foot. This, with two operations and a fall downstairs, involving a broken arm, is my season's record so far, leaving me in excellent general condition. And yet they tell me a vegetarian can't recuperate!" In this commentary to what had already been written by "musicians who are no revolutionists, and revolutionists who are no musicians," Shaw reads into Wagner far more Socialism than he had ever read into Ibsen. He took pains to base his interpretation upon the facts of Wagner's life - his connection with the revolution of 1848, his association with August Rœckel and Michael Bakounin, his later pamphlets on social evolution, religion, life, art, and the influence of riches - rather than upon his recorded utterances in regard to the specific meanings of the "Ring" music-dramas. It is not difficult to recognize, with Shaw, the portraiture of our capitalistic industrial system from the Socialist point of view in the slavery of the Nibelungs and the tyranny of Alberich; but little significance attaches to such cheap symbolism. It is more difficult to identify the young Siegfried with the anarchist Bakounin on the strength of the latter's notorious pamphlet demanding the demolition of existing institutions. To the *Ring of the Nibelungs*, Shaw has, so to speak, applied the Ibsenic-Nietzschean-Shavian philosophy as a unit of measure, and found it to apply at many points. Siegfried is a "totally unmoral person, a born Anarchist, the ideal of Bakounin, an

anticipation of the 'overman' of Nietzsche" a Germanized Dick Dudgeon or a Teutonic Prometheus. Whenever the philosophy of the "Ring" diverges from the Shavian philosophy, Wagner was "wandering in his mind." Whenever his own explanations do not agree with the *idée fixe* of Shaw, they only prove, as was once claimed by Shaw in the case of Ibsen, that Wagner was far less intellectually conscious of his purpose than Shaw. As an exposition of the Shavian philosophy, the book is worthy of note; as an exposition of the Wagnerian philosophy, it is unconvincing. The book is exceedingly ingenious and in places, brilliant; but it is the work of an ideologue and an a-priorist.

One final word in regard to Shaw's position as a champion of Wagner. While it is of little importance now, still Wagner and anti-Wagner was the great controversy of that time in music until anti-Wagnerism finally became ridiculous in the face of Wagner's overwhelming popularity. In the same way, Ibsen and anti-Ibsen was the great controversy in drama in London after 1889. In both instances, the whirligig of time has brought round its revenges. For some years, even before his death, Ibsen stood unchallenged as the premier dramatist of the age. And now that Wagner's battle is won and over-won, Shaw has the profound gratification of seeing "the professors, to avert the ridicule of their pupils, compelled to explain (quite truly) that Wagner's technical procedure in music is almost pedantically logical and grammatical; that the *Lohengrin* prelude is a masterpiece of the 'form' proper to its aim; and that his disregard of 'false relations,' and his free use of the most extreme discords without 'preparation,' were straight and sensible instances of that natural development of harmony which has proceeded continually from the time when common six-four chords were considered 'wrong,' and such free use of unprepared dominant sevenths and minor ninths as had become common in Mozart's time would have seemed the maddest cacophony." And in a letter to me, Mr. Shaw said (July 15th, 1905): "I was on the right side in both instances; that is all. According to the *Daily Chronicle*, Wagner and Ibsen were offensive impostors. As a matter of fact, they

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were the greatest living masters in their respective arts; and I knew that quite well. The critics of the nineteenth century had two first rate chances Ibsen and Wagner. For the most part they missed both. Second best they could recognize; but best was beyond them." *

Mr. Shaw's most recent incursion into the field of music criticism was occasioned by a criticism of Richard Strauss' *Elektra*, at the time of its first production in England in March, 1910, from the pen of the well known critic of music, Mr. Ernest Newman. The vigorous controversy between Mr. Shaw and Mr. Newman that ensued was, of course, quite inconclusive, so far as erecting any absolute standards by which Strauss' greatness as a dramatic composer might be judged. But it evoked from Mr. Shaw an outburst of enthusiasm unparalleled in his career as a critic of music:

"What Hofmannsthal and Strauss have done is to take Clytemnestra and Aegistheus, and by identifying them with everything that is evil and cruel, with all that needs must hate the highest when it sees it, with hideous domination and coercion of the higher by the baser, with the murderous rage in which the lust for a lifetime of orgiastic pleasure turns on its slaves in the torture of its disappointment and the sleepless horror and misery of its neurasthenia, to so rouse in us an overwhelming flood of wrath against it and ruthless resolution to destroy it, that *Elektra's* vengeance becomes holy to us; and we come to understand how even the gentlest of us could wield the axe of Orestes or twist our firm fingers in the black hair of Clytemnestra to drag back her head and leave her throat open to the stroke.

"That was a task hardly possible to an ancient Greek.

* Is Shaw, the anti-romantic, consistent in championing Wagner, the head and front of European romanticism? Shaw, the individualist, recognized that Wagner was a great creative force in art; that was sufficient cause for his championship. It may be interesting in this connection to consult Julius Bab's acute analysis of Shaw's Wagnerism: *Bernard Shaw* (S. Fischer, Berlin), pp. 210-214.

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. . . And that is the task which Hofmannsthal has achieved. Not even in the third scene of *Das Rheingold*, or in the Klingsor scenes in *Parzifal*, is there such an atmosphere of malignant and cancerous evil as we get here. And that the power with which it is done is not the power of the evil itself, but of the passion that detests and must and finally can destroy that evil, is what makes the work great, and makes us rejoice in its horror. . . .

"That the power of conceiving it should occur in the same individual as the technical skill and natural faculty needed to achieve its complete and overwhelming expression in music, is a stroke of the rarest good fortune that can befall a generation of men. I have often said, when asked to state the case against the fools and money-changers who are trying to drive us into a war with Germany, that the case consists of the single word, Beethoven. To-day, I should say with equal confidence, Strauss. That we should make war on Strauss and the heroic warfare and aspiration that he represents is treason to humanity. In this music drama Strauss has done for us just what he has done for his own countrymen: he has said for us, with an utterly satisfying force, what all the noblest powers of life within us are clamouring to have said, in protest against and defiance of the omnipresent villainies of our civilization; and this is the highest achievement of the highest art." *

So often was Shaw mocked by scepticism concerning his talent and by imperviousness to his mood, that he sometimes actually went to the length of tagging one of his Irish bulls with the explanatory parenthesis ("I speak as an Irishman"). If the larger public ever gains a just understanding of Shaw, it will be because they have found this central and directing clue: he speaks as an Irishman. The right to say in jest what is meant in earnest is a right the average Englishman denies; he agrees with Victor Hugo that "every man has a right to be

* *The 'Elektra' of Strauss and Hofmannsthal*. A letter to the editor of the *Nation* (London), March 19th, 1910.

a fool, but he should not abuse that right." M. Faguet has recently said of Sainte Beuve that he was guided by one of the finest professional consciences the world of literature has ever known. Early in his career, Shaw succeeded in imparting to his readers the conviction that his glaring deficiency was the total lack of a professional conscience. Shaw was preoccupied with the exposition of the eternal comedy. He is that hitherto unknown phenomenon in the history of musical criticism—a musical critic who charged his critical weapon with genuine comic force. The conviction has probably come to every musical critic in some moment of self-distrust that his effort to catch and imprison in written words the elusive spirit of music is, after all, only a more or less humorous subterfuge. In this respect Shaw differs from every other musical critic who ever lived: instead of feeling his criticism to be merely a humorous subterfuge, he actually believed it to be a comically veracious impression of reality.

No view of Shaw's unique attitude as a critic has yet been obtained that is not one-sided, false, or—what is far worse—misleading. The absurdly simple truth is that Shaw always aimed at saying, in the most forcible and witty way possible, exactly what he thought and felt, however absurd, unnatural, or comic these criticisms might sound to the "poor, silly, simple public." To the feelings of other musical critics, to the prejudices of the dry academic schools, or even to the consensus of opinion, crystallized through the lapse of years, he paid no heed whatsoever. He did not feel himself bound by the traditions of any journal, by any obligations, fancied or real, to operatic managers, or by the predilections of his audience. In fact, to put it in a homely way, he was "his own man," feeling free to express his opinions exactly as he chose. And it is perhaps no exaggeration to say that, since 1885, the whole spirit of English criticism, personified in Walkley, Archer and Shaw—an Englishman of French descent, a Scotchman, and an Irishman—has been a spirit of forthrightness, outspoken frankness and unblushing sincerity.

In the matter of individual style, Shaw occupies an absolutely unique position in English literature. He occupied a

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more unusual *terrain* than had ever been occupied before. Concerning the subjects in which he claimed to be thoroughly versed, he gaily announced himself as an authority. With an air of grandiose condescension, he once confessed that he might be mistaken: "Even I am not infallible—that is, not always." He really meant that he was. "Let it be remembered, that I am a superior person," he characteristically says, "and that what seemed incoherent and wearisome fooling to me may have seemed an exhilarating pastime to others. My heart knows only its own bitterness; and I do not desire to intermeddle with the joys of those among whom I am a stranger. I assert my intellectual superiority—that is all." He was ever sublimely conscious of his own supreme dialectical and critical skill. "Some day I must write a supplement to Schumann's 'Advice to Young Musicians.' The title will be 'Advice to Old Musicians'; and the first precept will run, 'Don't be in a hurry to contradict G. B. S., as he never commits himself on a musical subject until he knows at least six times as much about it as you do.'" If he had been matched in argument with the greatest living critic of the arts—and he was frequently matched against the greatest English critics—he would doubtless have said to him, in the language of the apocryphal anecdote: "All the world's mad save thee and me, John. And sometimes I think thee's a little mad too."

Behind all this "*infernal blague*" lurks the real critic, whose chief conviction is that "Bach in B minor" is not fit subject for enjoyment or criticism. "I would not be misunderstood," Mr. Shaw remarked to me one day, "in regard to my position about analysis and 'analytic criticism.' The analytic criticism I mercilessly condemn is the sort of criticism of Hamlet's soliloquy that reads: 'It is highly significant, in the first place, that Hamlet begins his soliloquy with the infinitive of the verb "To be," etc., etc.' Far from minimizing the function of analysis sanely and appropriately employed in criticism, I attribute my superiority as a critic to my superiority in the faculty of analysis." The inevitable reaction from "absolute music" was the dramatic expression of individuality, *e.g.*, Wagner. The inevitable reaction from "ana-

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lytic criticism" is the critical expression of individuality, *e.g.*, Shaw. He never hunted out false relations, consecutive fifths and sevenths, the first subject, the second subject, the working out, and all the rest of "the childishness that could be taught to a poodle." His supreme effort was to get away from a discussion of the technology of music to the *nuances* of the music itself, the source of its inspiration, the spirit of its genius. If Shaw should find Wagner an offensive charlatan and his themes cacophonous strings of notes, he would frankly say so, without making any effort to *prove* him so by laying down the first principles of character and composition, and showing that his conduct and his works are incompatible with these principles. The expert, in Shaw's view, should merely give you his personal opinion for what it is worth. Shaw protested against the whole academic system in England, and declared himself its open enemy. "This unhappy country would be as prolific of musical as of literary composers were it not for our schools of music, where they seize the young musician, turn his attention forcibly away from the artistic element in his art, and make him morbidly conscious of its mechanical conditions, especially the obsolete ones, until he at last becomes, not a composer, but an adept in a horribly dull sort of chess played with lines and dots, each player having different notions of what the right rules are, and playing his game so as to flourish his view under the noses of those who differ from him. Then he offers his insufferable gambits to the public as music, and is outraged because I criticize it as music and not as chess."

Shaw made the most persistent effort to encourage the employment of the vernacular in music, as well as in criticism of music. An arrant commonplace, made out of the most hackneyed commonplace in modern music, pleased him more than all the Tenterden Street specialties. "I cry 'Professor' whenever I find a forced avoidance of the vernacular in music under the impression that it is vulgar. . . . Your men who really can write, your Dickenses, Ruskins and Carlyles, and their like, are vernacular above all things: they cling to the locutions which everyday use has made

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a part of our common life. The professors may ask me whether I seriously invite them to make their music out of the commonplaces of the comic song writer? I reply, unabashed, that I do."

With the deepest fervour, he continued to preach the doctrine of spontaneity and naturalness. "Why hesitate to perpetrate the final outrage of letting loose your individuality, and saying just what you think in your own way as agreeably and frankly as you can?" His own aim was to reach that truly terrible fellow, the average man "the plain man who wants a plain answer." If he can only awake the attention of the man in the street and, by expressing himself frankly in everyday language, the quotidian commerce of thought, occasionally even in the vernacular of the street, make clear to that man the appeal that music makes to a critic acutely sensitive to the subtler implications of its highest forms, Shaw is perfectly satisfied with himself and his performance. Accordingly, he aimed, primarily, to make an exact record of the sensations induced by a certain piece of music, or a certain performer, *Don Juan* or *De Reszke*, *Letty Lind* or *The Pirates of Penzance*. He made no effort whatsoever to control the current of his humour. He allowed it to play as lightly about Patti, as uproariously about Paderewski, as derisively about *Vieuxtemps* as his inclination directed. The most solemn symphony excited his risibility to the explosion point, and the latest Mass suggested seaside promenades instead of the life of the world to come.

Shaw's efforts to free musical criticism from the blighting effects of academicism, his advocacy of the free expression of individuality, and his insistence upon the return to nature, both in music and in criticism, brought upon him the scorn and contempt that is always the meed of the would-be reformer. The French public looked up to Francisque Sarcey with a sort of filial veneration, and affectionately dubbed him "uncle." The English public sneered at Shaw's brilliant attacks upon their favourites and their idols, and looked down upon him, not as a reasonable human being, but, as Shaw expressed it, as a mere Aunt Sally. Not only did the critics and the public

ough at his revolutionary zeal, but they regarded him as an amusing incompetent, availing himself of his abundant gift of humour to supply the deficiency of any knowledge of music or of the possession of the faintest critical sense. Analytic criticism was revered, while the individual and impressionistic style of Shaw was immoderately enjoyed as the tricky device of a colossal humbug. Shaw fought against misrepresentation and prejudice with unabated vigour, continually confounding his critics with some unanswerable argument that logically reduced their attacks to nothingness. By apt examples, he often revealed the absurdities of analytic criticism in literature, once confronting his critics with the startling query: "I want to know whether it is just that a literary critic should be forbidden to make his living in this way on pain of being interviewed by two doctors and a magistrate, and haled off to bedlam forthwith; whilst the more a musical critic does it, the deeper the veneration he inspires. By systematically neglecting it I have lost caste as a critic even in the eyes of those who rail my abstinence with the greatest relief; and I should be tempted to eke out these columns in the Mesopotamian manner. I were not the slave of a commercial necessity and a vulgar ambition to have my articles read, this being the main reason why I write them, and the secret of the constant 'straining after effect' observable in my style."

Perhaps the most enlightening evidence as to Shaw's position as a critic of music is contained in his recital of an amusing incident. One day, it seems, a certain young man, whose curiosity overswayed his natural modesty, approached Shaw on the subject of the G. B. S. column in the *World*. "At last he came to his point with a rush by desperately risking the question: 'Excuse me, Mr. G. B. S., but *do* you know anything about music? The fact is, I am not capable of forming an opinion myself; but Dr. Blank says you don't, and—er—Dr. Blank is such a great authority that one hardly knows what to think.' Now this question put me into a difficulty, because I had already learnt by experience that the reason my writings on music and musicians are so highly appreciated is that they

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are supposed by many of my greatest admirers to be a huge joke, the point of which lies in the fact that I am totally ignorant of music, and that my character of critic is an exquisitely ingenious piece of acting, undertaken to gratify my love of mystification and paradox. From this point of view every one of my articles appears as a fine stroke of comedy, occasionally broadening into a harlequinade, in which I am the clown, and Dr. Blank the policeman. At first I did not realize this, and could not understand the air of utter disillusion and loss of interest in me that would come over people in whose houses I incautiously betrayed some scrap of amateurish enlightenment. But the naïve exclamation, 'Oh! you *do* know something about it, then!' at last became familiar to me; and I now take particular care not to expose my knowledge. When people hand me a sheet of instrumental music, and ask my opinion of it, I carefully hold it upside down, and pretend to study it in that position with the eye of an expert. They invite me to try their new grand piano, I attempt to open it at the wrong end; and when the young lady of the house informs me that she is practising the 'cello, I innocently ask her whether the mouthpiece did not cut her lips dreadfully at first. This line of conduct gives enormous satisfaction, in which I share to a rather greater extent than is generally supposed. But, after all, the people whom I take in thus are only amateurs. To place my impostorship beyond question, I require to be certified as such by authorities like our Bachelors and Doctors of Music—gentlemen who can write a '*Nunc Dimittis*' in five real parts, and know the difference between a tonal fugue and a real one, and can tell you how old Monteverde was on his thirtieth birthday, and have views as to the true root of the discord of the seventh on the supertonic, and devoutly believe that *si contra fa diabolus est*. But I have only to present myself to them in the character of a man who has been through these dreary games without ever discovering the remotest vital connection between them and the art of music—a state of mind so inconceivable by them—to make them exclaim:

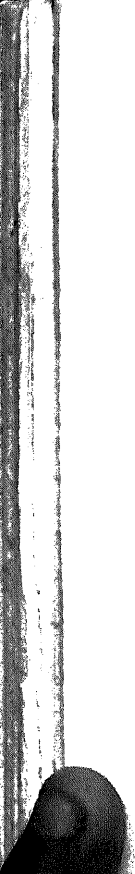
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“Preposterous ass! that never read so far
To know the cause why music was ordained,

and give me the desired testimonials at once. And so I manage to scrape along without falling under suspicion of being an honest man.

“However, since mystification is not likely to advance us in the long run, may I suggest that there must be something wrong in the professional tests which have been successfully applied to Handel, to Mozart, to Beethoven, to Wagner, and last, though not least, to me, with the result in every case of our condemnation as ignoramuses and charlatans. Why is it that when Dr. Blank writes about music, nobody but a professional musician can understand him; whereas the man-in-the-street, if fond of art and capable of music, can understand the writings of Mendelssohn, Wagner, Liszt, Berlioz, or any of the composers? Why, again, is it that my colleague, W. A., for instance, in criticizing Mr. Henry Arthur Jones’ play the other day, did not *parse* all the leading sentences in it? I will not be so merciless as to answer these questions now, though I know the solution, and am capable of giving it if provoked beyond endurance. Let it suffice for the moment that writing is a very difficult art, criticism a very difficult process, and music not easily to be distinguished, without special critical training, from the scientific, technical and professional conditions of its performance, composition and teaching. And if the critic is to please the congregation, who wants to read only about the music, it is plain that he must appear quite beside the point to the organ-blower, who wants to read about his bellows, which he can prove to be the true source of all the harmony.” *

* *Music*, in the *World*, February 18th, 1893.



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Mac	Beth.
Oth	Ello.
Comedy of Er	Rors.
Merchant of Ve	Nice.
Coriol	Anus.
Midsummer Night's D	Ream.
Merry Wives of Win	Dsor.
Measure for Mea	Sure.
Much Ado about Not	Hing.
Antony and Cleop	Atra.
All's Well that Ends	Well.*

* The conclusive cryptographic proof that Bernard Shaw wrote the plays usually attributed to Shakespeare—discovered by Mr. S. T. James, of Leeds.

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but he rightly judged that a dramatic critic learns as much from having been a dramatic author as Shakespeare or Pinero from having been actors. It was his chief distinction to have touched life at many points; unlike many contemporary dramatic critics, he had not specialized to such an extent as to lose his character as man and citizen, and become a mere playgoer. "My real aim," he asserted in reference to his work on the *Saturday Review*, "is to widen the horizon of the critic, especially of the dramatic critic, whose habit at present is to bring a large experience of stage life to bear on a scanty experience of real life, although it is certain that all really fruitful criticism of the drama must bring a wide and practical knowledge of real life to bear on the stage."

Jowett's characterization of Disraeli as "a curious combination of the Arch-Priest of Humbug and a great man," has a certain appropriateness for Bernard Shaw. That fictitious personage known as G. B. S. is Shaw's most remarkable creation. With characteristic daring, his very first article broke the sacred tradition of anonymity, inviolate till then in the conservative columns of the *Saturday Review*. With the innate instinct of the journalist, he devoted himself to sedulous self-advertisement, creating a traditionary character unrivalled in conceit, in cleverness, and in iconoclastic effrontery. Charged with being conceited, he replied: "No, I am not really a conceited man: if you had been through all that I have been through, and done all the things I have done, you would be ten times as conceited. It's only a pose, to prevent the English people from seeing that I am serious. If they did, they would make me drink the hemlock." Do not make the mistake of concluding, from this confession, that Shaw was merely a ghastly little celebrity posing in a vacuum. If "New lamps for old" is the cry of this ultra-modern fakir, "Remember Aladdin" is the warning of the suspicious populace. Shaw's chief claim for consideration is not merely that he has spent his life in crying down the futility and uselessness of the old lumps, but that with equal earnestness he has advertised the

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Shaw's incorrigible practice of "blaming the Bard," publicly inaugurated in the *Saturday Review*, is no mere antic in which he indulges for the fun of the thing, but as inevitable an outcome of his philosophy as is his championship of Ibsen. His inability to see a masterpiece in every play of Shakespeare's arises largely from the fact that he knows his Shakespeare as he knows his Bunyan, his Dickens, his Ibsen. It is flying in the face of fact to aver that a man who knew his Shakespeare from cover to cover by the time he was twenty does not like or admire Shakespeare. "I am fond," says Shaw, "unaffectedly fond, of Shakespeare's plays." He looks back upon those delightful evenings at the New Shakespeare Society, under F. J. Furnival, with the most unfeigned pleasure. A careful perusal of his score or more articles on Shakespeare in the *Saturday Review* shows that he has not only studied Shakespeare consistently, and periodically interpreted him from a definite point of view, but that he always fought persistently for the performance of his plays in their integrity. And although he has by no means taken advantage of all his opportunities, yet he has managed to see between twenty and thirty of Shakespeare's plays performed on the stage.

When Shaw first read Mr. Henry Arthur Jones's words: "Surely the crowning glory of our nation is our Shakespeare; and remember he was one of a great school," he almost burst, as he put it, with the intensity of his repudiation of the second clause in that utterance. Against the first clause he had nothing to say; but the Elizabethans Shaw has always regarded chiefly as "shallow literary persons, drunk with words, and seeking in crude stories of lust and crime an excuse for that wildest of all excitements, the excitement of imaginative self-expression by words." Mr. Shaw once defined an Elizabethan as "a man with an extraordinary and imposing power of saying things, and with nothing whatever to say." Indeed, it was not to be expected that the arch-foe of Romance, in modern art and modern life, would be edified with the imaginative and romantic violence of the Elizabethans. Nothing less than a close and, so to speak, biologic study of humanity in the nude

can satisfy one who avers that Romance is the root of modern pessimism and the bane of modern self respect.

To call the Elizabethans imaginative amounted with Shaw to the same thing as saying that, artistically, they had delirium tremens. The true Elizabethan he found to be a "blank-verse beast, itching to frighten other people with the superstitious terrors and cruelties in which he does not himself believe, and wallowing in blood, violence, muscularity of expression and strenuous animal passion as only literary men do when they become thoroughly depraved by solitary work, sedentary cowardice, and starvation of the sympathetic centres." He passes them in review, calling them a crew of dehumanized specialists in blank verse! Webster, a Tuscan laureate; Chapman, with his sublime balderdash; Marlowe, the pothouse brawler, with his clumsy horse-play, his butcherly rant, and the resourceless tum-tum of his "mighty line." Even in this dust-heap, Shaw managed to find some merit and variety. Was not Greene really amusing, Marston spirited and "silly-clever," Cyril Tourneur able to string together lines of which any couple picked out and quoted separately might pass as a fragment of a real organic poem? Though a brutish pedant, Jonson was not heartless; Marlowe often charged his blank-verse with genuine colour and romance; while Beaumont and Fletcher, although possessing no depth, no conviction, no religious or philosophic basis, were none the less dainty romantic poets, and really humorous character-sketchers in Shakespeare's popular style. "Unfortunately, Shakespeare dropped into the middle of these ruffianly pedants (the Elizabethans); and since there was no other shop than theirs to serve his apprenticeship in, he had perforce to become an Elizabethan too.

"In such a school of falsehood, bloody-mindedness, bombast, and intellectual cheapness, his natural standard was inevitably dragged down, as we know to our cost; but the degree to which he dragged their standard up has saved them from oblivion." Indeed, Shakespeare, enthused by his interest in the art of acting and by his desire to "educate the public," tried to make that public accept genuine studies of life and character

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in, for instance, *Measure for Measure* and *All's Well that Ends Well*. But the public would have none of them (traditionary evidence, be it noted), "preferring a fantastic sugar doll like Rosalind to such serious and dignified studies of women as Isabella and Helena."

Shakespeare had discovered that "the only thing that paid in the theatre was romantic nonsense, and that when he was forced by this to produce one of the most effective samples of romantic nonsense in existence—a feat which he performed easily and well—he publicly disclaimed any responsibility for its pleasant and cheap falsehood by borrowing the story and throwing it in the face of the public with the phrase '*As You Like It*.' " Despite Mr. Chesterton's assertion that Shaw has read an ironic snub into the title, and that after all it was only a sort of hilarious bosh, Shaw still maintains, as he did fifteen years ago, that when Shakespeare used that phrase he meant exactly what he said, and that the phrase: "What You Will," which he applied to *Twelfth Night*, meaning "Call it what you please," is not, in Shakespearean or any other English, the equivalent of the perfectly unambiguous and penetratingly simple phrase: "As You Like It."

Shakespeare's popularity, Shaw would have us believe, was due to a deliberate pandering to the public taste for "romantic nonsense." Shaw holds that Shakespeare's supreme power lies in his "enormous command of word-music, which gives fascination to his most blackguardly repartees and sublimity to his hollowest platitudes, besides raising to the highest force all his gifts as an observer, an imitator of personal mannerisms and characteristics, a humorist and a story-teller." No matter how poor, coarse, cheap and obvious may be the thought in *Much Ado about Nothing*, for example, the mood is charming and the music of the words expresses the mood, transporting you into another, an enchanted world.

"When a flower-girl tells a coster to hold his jaw, for nobody is listening to him, and he retorts: 'Oh, you're there, are you, you beauty?' they reproduce the wit of Beatrice and Benedick exactly. But put it this way: 'I wonder that you will still be talking, Signor Benedick: nobody marks you.'"

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timementality and the mechanical lilt of blank-verse." All the truly heroic which came so naturally to Bunyan is missing in Shakespeare. In the words of Whitman, Shaw regards Shakespeare as "the æsthetic-heroic among poets, lacking both in the democratic and spiritual," but never as "the heroic-heroic, which is the greatest development of the spirit." In Shaw's eyes, Shakespeare's "test of the worth of life is the vulgar hedonic test, and since life cannot be justified by this or any other external test, Shakespeare comes out of his reflective period a vulgar pessimist, oppressed with a logical demonstration that life is not worth living, and only surpassing Thackeray in respect of being fertile enough, instead of repeating '*Vanitas vanitatum*' at second-hand, to word the futile doctrine differently and better. . . . This does not mean that Shakespeare lacked the enormous fund of joyousness which is the secret of genius, but simply that, like most middle-class Englishmen bred in private houses, he was a very incompetent thinker, and took it for granted that all inquiry into life began and ended with the question: 'Does it pay?' . . . Having worked out his balance-sheet and gravely concluded that life's but a poor player, etc., and thereby deeply impressed a public which, after a due consumption of beer and spirits, is ready to believe that everything maudlin is tragic, and everything senseless sublime, Shakespeare found himself laughing and writing plays and getting drunk at the 'Mermaid' much as usual, with Ben Jonson finding it necessary to reprove him for a too extravagant sense of humour." Like Ernest Crosby, Shaw regards Shakespeare as the poet of courts, of lords and ladies. His fundamental assent is accorded to Tolstoy in his declaration that Shakespeare's quintessential deficiency was his failure to face, fairly and squarely, the eternal question of life: "What are we alive for?" *

It is a task of the merest supererogation to go into the details of Shaw's admiration of Shakespeare's plays, to quote his praise of *Twelfth Night* and *A Midsummer Night's Dream* as

* Concerning Shaw's general attitude towards Shakespeare, compare the *Letter from Mr. G. Bernard Shaw appended to Tolstoy on Shakespeare*, Funk and Wagnalls Co., 1906.

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"crown jewels of dramatic poetry"; of *Romeo and Juliet* with its "lines that tighten the heart or catch you up into the heights"; of *Richard III.*, as the best of all the "Punch and Judy" plays, in which the hero delights man by provoking God, and dies unrepentant and game to the last; of *Julius Cæsar*, in which the "dramatist's art can be carried no higher on the plane chosen"; of *Othello*, which "remains magnificent by the volume of its passion and the splendour of its word-music"; of the "great achievement" of *Hamlet*; and of *Macbeth*, than which "no greater tragedy will ever be written." Not only is Shaw unaffectedly fond of Shakespeare: he pities the man who cannot enjoy him:

"He has outlived hundreds of abler thinkers, and will outlast a thousand more. His gift of telling a story (provided someone else told it to him first); his enormous power over language, as conspicuous in his senseless and silly abuse of it as in his miracles of expression; his humour; his sense of idiosyncratic character; and his prodigious fund of that vital energy which is, it seems, the true differentiating property behind the faculties, good, bad, or indifferent, of the man of genius, enable him to entertain us so effectively that the imaginary scenes and people he has created become more real to us than our actual life—at least, until our knowledge and grip of actual life begins to deepen and glow beyond the common. When I was twenty I knew everybody in Shakespeare, from Hamlet to Abhorson, much more intimately than I knew my living contemporaries." *

The literary side of the mission of Ibsen in England, as Shaw conceived it, was the rescue of that unhappy country from its centuries of slavery to Shakespeare. The moral side of Ibsen's mission was the breaking of the shackles of slavery to conventional ideals of virtue. And Shaw's iconoclastic cry in the *Saturday Review* was "Down with Shakespeare. Great

* *Blaming the Bard*, in the *Saturday Review*, September 26th, 1896.